



## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL**

Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Wednesday, 1 May 2019 at 5.15 pm at the Council Chamber, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale, Tonypany, CF40 2XX.

### **County Borough Councillors - Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members in attendance:-**

Councillor M Adams (Chair)

Councillor S Evans	Councillor J Bonetto
Councillor P Jarman	Councillor H Boggis
Councillor J Brencher	Councillor D Macey
Councillor L Walker	Councillor G Caple
Councillor A Cox	Councillor M Griffiths
Councillor S Morgans	

### **Non Committee/Education Co-opted Members**

Councillor R Yeo – Chair Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee  
Councillor S Rees-Owen – Chair Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee  
Councillor J Williams – Chair Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee  
Mr J Fish - Voting Elected Parent Governor  
Mr K Wilhite – Voting Elected Parent Governor

### **Officers in attendance**

Mr C Hanagan – Service Director, Democratic Services and Communications

#### **46 Apologies**

An apology of absence was received from County Borough Councillors E George, J Harries and E Stephens.

#### **47 Welcome**

The Chair extended a welcome to the Co-opted Members, in particular to the new Co-opted Member, Mr Wilhite.

#### **48 Declaration of Interest**

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, there were no declarations made pertaining to the agenda.

#### **49 Review - Overview & Scrutiny 'Fit for the Future'**

The Service Director, Democratic Services and Communications presented his report with the purpose of outlining the proposals of the Council's Scrutiny arrangements and to update Members on the progress arising from the WAO report 'Fit for the Future'.

It was reported that there have been a number of significant changes to Scrutiny in RCT since the WAO report has been published with more pre scrutiny being

undertaken which is strengthening the Council's governance arrangements. Recently, there have been a number of examples where Scrutiny has been given the opportunity to engage on more than one occasion with issues such as the Modernisation of Residential Care and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools. There is a more formal arrangement in place for meetings of the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs and there have been a number of improvements in respect of the prominence of Scrutiny, having its own dedicated website, Scrutiny Chairs blogs and further opportunities being promoted via the Council's Communications team.

The Service Director stressed that the Council is responding to those areas that need improving as directed by the Wales Audit Office but he referred to those areas which need further consideration such as:-

- The existing model of scrutiny which, although supports a cross cutting approach can often appear confusing when considering the remit of each Scrutiny Committee;
- The work programmes which have an over emphasis on information reports and the number of items on each scrutiny agenda can dilute the effect of scrutiny;
- The effectiveness of Scrutiny Working Groups to deliver more meaningful outcomes; and
- More emphasis on the use of social media and web content as a tool to increase public engagement.

With these points in mind the Service Director proposed the following changes are considered and progressed:-

- The Terms of Reference of each of the Scrutiny Committees is reviewed and specifically the topic 'Economy' which lends itself better to the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee so as to give it due regard;
- Link the Scrutiny Committees to the Corporate priorities so that members can make the connection to a service area;
- More streamlined agendas and work programmes to sharpen Scrutiny;
- A move towards a select committee approach;
- Summons the mover and seconder of future Notices of Motions to the Scrutiny Working Group to ensure the correct alignment of the work; and
- A greater emphasis on the Council website and social media to promote Scrutiny and engage with residents and to move forward with arrangements to web-cast meetings of the Council.

In conclusion, the Service Director confirmed that the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs had been provided with the opportunity to consider these proposals and a verbal update would be forthcoming at the Corporate Governance & Constitution Committee. Scrutiny was advised that although recognising the requirements of the WAO, the improvements would be made in a way that suits a Rhondda Cynon Taf model. As previously alluded to, arrangements in other local authorities would not necessarily suit RCT so it is for the Council to find its own scrutiny structure.

The Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee proposed that amendments be made to the recommendations set out in the report to reflect that the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs have been fully engaged with the proposals to review the Scrutiny Committee terms of reference and will be consulted as appropriate (the current terms of reference of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee

was highlighted as being in need of improvement), likewise in respect of the work that will be undertaken to streamline the agendas and work programmes. The Chair stated that this would demonstrate a collective responsibility towards the review of the Council's Scrutiny arrangements.

The Chair also alluded to undertaking visit to the Welsh Government Assembly to see first-hand how their model of select committee operates.

A member of the Committee commented that although a review of the terms of reference is worthwhile, it may have been of value reviewing the terms of reference before the Council AGM rather than after so that Group Leaders can allocate their Members to the appropriate committee to reflect the best fit. The member considered the wording within the report, that the mover and seconder of the Notice of Motion is 'summonsed' to attend the Working Group to be ill chosen and advised that once the motion has passed it becomes the Council's motion. It was agreed that the wording should be amended but that the invitation to the Mover and seconder should remain in place and on a more formal basis.

The Chair of the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee, present at the meeting, made reference to the need for themes on the scrutiny work programmes to be of value and to be relevant to the residents of RCT. He added that there needed to be some clarity to the meaning behind the Notices of Motion and having the mover and seconder present from the start would shape the work of the scrutiny working group and clarify the essence of the motion.

Clarity was provided in respect of how the Council aims to strengthen ownership of forward work programmes and committee agendas by formalising the Scrutiny/Cabinet member performance and inviting the Cabinet Member to support and respond to a suite of information. The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications explained that going forward, Scrutiny Working Groups are less restrictive and form a platform from which to produce tangible outcomes. Members were also advised that the proposal to have the relevant Cabinet Member attend scrutiny by invitation only, when there are key issues under scrutiny would produce more challenge and reduce the potential for scrutiny proceedings to be hindered by their presence at all meetings. Some Members considered it good practice to have a Cabinet Member present at all meetings although others understood the worth of the process 'by invitation' only

Members agreed that some information reports to Scrutiny were overly large and data heavy such as the Schools Admissions reports to Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee which did not necessarily produce outcomes. They commented that there is a balance to strike with the weighty tones of some of the information reports. As a solution the Service Director, Democratic Services and Communications suggested that there could be a dedicated item to receive information reports which would free up space for scrutiny and challenge. A member asked whether Welsh Government could be approached so that any Statutory reports could be dealt with via delegated decisions via the Council website.

It was noted that as items are added or amended on the Cabinet Work Programme so the Chair of Overview & Scrutiny should be informed to ensure all opportunities to undertake scrutiny of the important issues are available. In conclusion, a request was made that Scrutiny members need to be kept informed and trained as the scrutiny process evolves.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED** to:-

1. Endorse the recommended proposals numbered 1-4 outlined in section 7 of the report subject to the following amendments:-
  - 2.1 That the Terms of Reference of each of the scrutiny Committees be reviewed, refined and agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its first meeting, (prior to consideration by the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs) following the Council Annual General Meeting;
  - 2.2 Develop more streamlined work programmes to ensure a more outcome based approach is taken forward following agreement of the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs (and respective Scrutiny Committees);
  - 2.3 That reference to the word '*summons*' the Mover and Secunder of a Notice of motion to a scrutiny meeting' is removed and the invitation to the Mover and Secunder to participate in the Scrutiny Working Group is formalised;
- 3 Recommend to the Corporate Governance & Constitution Committee that the terms of reference of each of the scrutiny committees be reviewed and refined and agreed by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee (prior to consideration by the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs) following the AGM and as worded at 2.1 above;
- 4 That authority is provided to the Proper Officer to update the Council Constitution accordingly to reflect the changes to the Committees Terms of Reference;
- 5 That the progress to date in respect of the proposals for improvement identified by the Wales Audit Office – Fit for the Future and the responses set out in section 10 of the report i.e. the national discussion paper '[six themes to help make scrutiny fit for future](#)', issued by the Wales Audit Office in February 2019 have been acknowledged by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

**This meeting closed at 18:50**

**Cllr M Adams  
Chairman**