

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CHAIRS & VICE CHAIRS

Minutes of the meeting of the Chairs & Vice Chairs meeting held on Tuesday, 1 October 2019 at 5.00 pm at the Committee Room 1.

County Borough Councillors - Chairs & Vice Chairs Members in attendance:-

Councillor M Adams (Chair)

Councillor S Bradwick Councillor S Evans
Councillor G Holmes Councillor W Lewis
Councillor G Thomas Councillor R Yeo

Officers in attendance

Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication

10 Apology

An apology of absence was received from County Borough Councillors J Bonetto, M Powell, S Rees-Owen and T Williams.

11 Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED – to note that there were no declarations of interest made at the meeting pertaining to the agenda.

12 Minutes

RESOLVED – to approve as an accurate record the minutes of the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs meeting held on the 12th June 2019 as an accurate record

13 Scrutiny Arrangements

The Service Director Democratic Services & Communications presented his report and advised that with the permission of the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs, he would deal with the first two items on the agenda together as they covered similar points but would refer to two items from the report in isolation i.e. information reports and consultation links.

The Service Director referred Members to the information reports which would feature on the Scrutiny agendas in the future and had already been evidenced in meetings of the Finance & Performance and Children & Young People Scrutiny Committees. He explained that the information reports were simply that, information reports for reference only and accessed via a link. This would ensure that the agendas would be more focussed on those items which would require challenge and produce significant outcomes.

It was suggested by the Service Director that perhaps the information reports could be considered as the first item on the agenda which may allow opportunity for the Chairs to provide more context around the reports. This would enable

Members to understand their purpose and whilst not considering them in detail, acknowledge their content and relevance to the Committee.

The Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee suggested that a synopsis of the content of the information reports for Members could be provided to note. He reiterated that the information reports are not for discussion at the meeting but there is a process to follow should members require further information about the reports.

In respect of the consultation links, the Service Director Democratic Services & Communications stated that the Scrutiny Graduate Officer would continue to circulate the information on a monthly basis which would provide Members with details of open consultations run by Welsh Government. This would flag up any specific items for possible response by the relevant Scrutiny Committees and presented a real opportunity for Scrutiny to become engaged with Policy development and changes such as the opportunity for consultation with the Local Government Bill.

Power Point Presentation

The Service Director Democratic Services & Communications presented a power point presentation highlighting the development of Scrutiny within RCT, particularly the links with the senior leadership team (SLT) which enhance the lines of communication with the scrutiny function, the improving relations with the Council's communications team and the open door policy between Cabinet and Scrutiny. The Service Director referred to the good relationship Members have with Council officers and the improved reporting mechanism as identified in the recent opportunity to undertake pre scrutiny of the Council's Corporate Plan, which had demonstrated real engagement and realised genuine engagement.

The Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs were reminded that the public engagement protocol had been successfully utilised in the recent Call-In meeting and that together with more developed web pages is enabling scrutiny to be more accessible to the public.

It was suggested that in the longer term, pre scrutiny could be further developed by identifying opportunities at an earlier stage so as to produce meaningful outcomes with increased frequency.

The Service Director Democratic Services & Communications discussed the introduction of pre meetings to the current scrutiny arrangements. He reminded Chairs and Vice Chairs that this practice had been undertaken in the past and could be revisited by holding formal pre meetings where key themes of the meeting ahead could be addressed and discussed, a practice used in Westminster's select committees. It was stated that other local authorities have agreed that the practice does support the meeting as it can reduce repetition amongst questions.

The Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee suggested that in the first instance officers reports should be better informed and more user friendly for the benefit of the public. The Chair felt that some reports to Scrutiny had not been informative and of benefit to Members or the public.

Some Members raised concern in respect of pre meetings where in some cases questions may be pre prepared and some Members recalled previous

experiences of pre meetings which had not brought value to the outcome of the Committee. The Service Director stated that the it was proposed that the pre meetings commence at 5pm with the Committee at 5.30pm, they would provide opportunity for a particular questioning strategy to be undertaken which would achieve real challenge and more efficient meetings.

Following consideration of the matter it was **RESOLVED** to revisit the practice of pre meetings at a later date and in the meantime emphasise the need for Officer reports to be more concise and user friendly.

14 Scrutiny Training

The Service Director Democratic Services & Communications confirmed that a scrutiny training session had been arranged for all Members of the Council's Scrutiny Committees, to be held on the 25th October 2019 within the Council Offices. It was anticipated that the training, led by Mr Dave Mckenna, would address a number of topics such as looking at ways to better use social media and public engagement by producing a dedicated, quarterly scrutiny newsletter, webcasting and having consistent scrutiny arrangements.

The Chair of Overview & Scrutiny reported two further dates for consideration, the 24th October 2019 as the next Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the 29th October for the Extra Ordinary Council meeting.

RESOLVED that the Chairs and Vice Chairs where possible attend the Scrutiny training to be held on the 25th October 2019.

15 Scrutiny /Cabinet Engagement Sessions

RESOLVED to acknowledge the current arrangements for the Cabinet/Scrutiny engagement sessions in the attached list which set out the dates of the forthcoming meetings which continue to cement the strong links between Scrutiny and Cabinet

16 Exemplars to the Paper Light Approach - Scrutiny Committees

Members were reminded of the recent email circulated to Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs encouraging them to lead the way with the Council's paperless approach to become an exemplar of the Paper light approach by utilising the Modern Gov. system, rather than receiving paper copy agendas. It was agreed that a crib sheet would be produced for the Chairs in advance of every Committee which would act as an aide memoir, listing the agenda items and any other text for inclusion

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** that all Chairs and Vice Chairs would forego hard copies of the Committee agendas.

17 Scrutiny Work Programmes for the 2019/20 Municipal Year

Each Chair/Vice Chair was invited to highlight one or two key items from their work programmes as follows:-

Overview & Scrutiny Committee -

- The Scrutiny toolkit working group (Low carbon vehicles) had concluded its

work and submitted a number of recommendations to the Executive;

- A notice of motion referred to the Committee in respect of rail development across the County Borough to include the wider county wide footprint

Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee-

- Employment land/Manufacturing/Availability of Industrial estates in RCT

Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee-

- Empty Properties/Extra Care provision in RCT

Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee-

- Impact of the work in the Central South Consortium's business plan on the region and RCT Council

Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee

- Street Cleansing
- Open invitation to all Members to visit the MRF facility in Bryn Pica.

RESOLVED to acknowledge the Chair and Vice Chair contributions.

This meeting closed at 5.45 pm

**Cllr M Adams
Chairman.**