

**Caerphilly County Borough Council Health Social Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny  
Committee**

**Peer Observation Feedback by Monmouthshire County Council Peer Learning  
Exchange Team**

**12th February 2013**

**Organisation / Environment**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Areas for improvement</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good attendance by Members and co-optees.</li> <li>• Dealt with minutes quickly and efficiently.</li> <li>• Warm welcome by Chair.</li> <li>• Scrutiny Officer set the scene well.</li> <li>• It seemed that officers were committed to attending scrutiny, however, all the officers stayed for the whole meeting. Consider timing agendas so officers can attend for their item and leave (i.e. better use of officer time).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We felt that the item on the budget should have been the first report because the others were 'for information'. Although we were not in the room, we thought this should have had priority when everyone was fresh, rather than leave it to the end of the agenda.</li> <li>• Too many information items and too many items on the agenda overall.</li> <li>• Because of the number of officers and co-optees, it was not clear who was who.</li> <li>• Difficult to hear some voices.</li> <li>• Why were all departmental officers and Cabinet Members there for all of the meeting and sitting amongst the members rather than separately as witnesses?</li> <li>• Not clear who was managing the agenda and meeting - Chair/members or departmental officers?</li> </ul>

**Practice**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Areas for improvement</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some good questions.</li> <li>• Chair tried to ensure discussions kept on track.</li> <li>• Good that many different people present but consider how they could have been engaged better.</li> <li>• Chair demonstrated some good chairing skills – consider how to encourage all members to ask questions.</li> <li>• Positive that Cabinet Member attended to give his verbal update, but the Committee missed the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some presentations were very lengthy and perhaps all that is required is a brief resume from the officers as members would have read the reports prior to the meeting.</li> <li>• Questioning of Michael may have led to disclosure of sensitive information. We felt that he was put on the spot and wondered whether it might have been better if the committee had met with him informally.</li> </ul>

<p>opportunity to question or challenge on any issues. There seemed to be no value to scrutiny in having him there.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting appeared to be run by departmental officers.</li> <li>• There were too many statements/observations from committee members.</li> <li>• It seemed that there was no structure to the meeting or questions and therefore we wondered whether any planning for the meeting had taken place.</li> <li>• Role of Cabinet Member was unclear. For example he said that he had invited Michael to scrutiny whereas it is the role of scrutiny to invite attendees.</li> </ul>
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### Outcomes and Impact

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Areas for improvement</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A committee member identified two issues for future scrutiny – positive.</li> <li>• Committee Members clearly cared about issues.</li> <li>• No politics were apparent.</li> <li>• Consider how the Committee could work better as a team.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No performance management issues raised where appropriate, and there was little if any relevant performance information integrated into the reports that would have helped to give a more rounded picture and support relevant questions.</li> <li>• It wasn't clear what the Committee wanted to achieve as the reports were for information and there was no summary of discussion or what would happen next after each item. We could not therefore identify any outcomes from the proceedings.</li> <li>• There was no challenge or holding to account and very little probing.</li> <li>• There was a lot of focus on <u>activities</u> but not on whether <u>policies</u> or <u>strategies</u> are effective.</li> </ul>

## Caerphilly CBC Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee

### Peer Observation Feedback by Monmouthshire County Council Peer Learning Exchange Team

5th March 2013

#### Organisation / Environment

Strengths	Areas for improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We could hear this committee better than the previous one. We thought the microphone system significantly aided the meeting, given the size of the room and ensured the committee looked organised and professional.</li> <li>• We felt the technology in the room i.e. the set-up was very good, the screen for Powerpoint Presentations seemed very straightforward to use and ensured everyone had a clear view.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paper copies of the powerpoint presentation would have been helpful.</li> <li>• We felt there could be a potential imbalance between officers (9 plus committee clerk and scrutiny officer) and cabinet members (2 plus 2 obs), and scrutiny members (11) which can alter the dynamic. We recognised the subject matter warranted the officers presence although this could be done in a different way in that officers attend only for their item.</li> <li>• The committee could have possibly benefited from the use of nameplates and separate seating arrangements for witnesses to ensure roles and responsibilities were clearer in terms of who was being scrutinised and who were the scrutineers.</li> <li>• We queried the fixed item on the agenda for Cabinet reports that had previously been discussed at Cabinet – we were a little unsure of the purpose of these and whether postscrutiny would add value.</li> </ul>

#### Practice

Strengths	Areas for improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The chair was very good. Welcoming, businesslike, knowledgeable about details and good at making sure he summarised discussions at the end of each agenda item.</li> <li>• It was positive that we couldn't differentiate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We felt the committee may have benefited from a little more context / scene-setting to clarify why the items were coming to scrutiny.</li> <li>• We felt that the passport item</li> </ul>

<p>between new and old members. Some of the new members asked very good questions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many questions were good and fair</li> <li>• Conduct of the meeting was businesslike</li> <li>• Members asked for monitoring updates to be brought to future meetings. They were confident to do this.</li> <li>• Most members were engaged in the meeting, seemed to be listening and asked questions. Most Members asked questions. We were surprised at how large the scrutiny committees are and would be keen to hear how chairs manage to involve the whole committee in debate. How can all members be better engaged</li> <li>• Most questions were questions and not statements.</li> <li>• The relationship between officers and members seemed to be good and not too cosy. The chair wasn't dependent on officers and was very much able to chair the meeting without much support.</li> </ul>	<p>presentation was long and the opportunity for discussion amongst the committee on the outcomes of the project was much shorter, possibly an imbalance here.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We weren't sure whether the engagement strategy had been brought to scrutiny a little early, as it lacked some of the elements members raised i.e. clear and measurable measures, targets, baselines etc.</li> <li>• We felt there were a few issues that were not addressed, e.g. there could have been some further probing in some instances e.g. what the council are doing about the other 97% of NEETS?</li> </ul>
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## Outcomes and Impact

Strengths	Areas for improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The chair clarified and summed up agenda items well, referring back to Member's comments regarding baselines, performance data etc.</li> <li>• There were some good questions about outcomes, impact, performance measurement and setting of baselines.</li> <li>• Links were made between agenda items and issues from performance scrutiny meetings / work programme (e.g. citizen engagement and passport items were linked to workforce plan forthcoming item on work programme)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We were unsure as to whether officers benefitting from senior pay changes or Cabinet members involved in the remuneration committee decisions should have declared an interest/stayed in the room.</li> <li>• In terms of impact, we felt the Committee could have impacted more on the engagement strategy item.</li> <li>• All four cabinet members stayed for the whole meeting which we felt may not particularly be the best use of their time. They didn't present any of the items so the ownership / accountability aspect was not clear. Cabinet Members could attend as witnesses to answer questions on relevant items.</li> <li>• Similarly, we noticed that all officers stayed for the whole meeting and we felt their attendance could be addressed in a similar way to attendance of the Cabinet Member.</li> </ul>

