



## SCRUTINY LEADERSHIP GROUP – 2<sup>ND</sup> OCTOBER 2019

**SUBJECT: SCRUTINY REVIEW ACTION PLAN**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION AND CORPORATE SERVICES**

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### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To update Scrutiny Leadership Group on the actions plan developed to monitor the implementation of the recommendations of the Scrutiny Review 2018, agreed by Council on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2019.

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 This report summarises the actions contained in the scrutiny improvement action plan to implement the recommendations of the Scrutiny Review report to Council on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2019. The report illustrates what actions are already completed with regard to changes to committees' names, the number of committees and removal of the Cabinet Member Statement. The report details what progress has been achieved in respect of raising the profile of scrutiny and also scrutiny training.

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 Scrutiny Leadership Group is asked to consider the Action Plan attached at Appendix 1 and comment on the progress to date, as detailed in this report.
- 3.2 Scrutiny Leadership Group is asked consider the actions in respect of enhancing and raising the profile of scrutiny identified at 5.4.2 in this report and comment.

### **4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 To monitor and provide oversight of the scrutiny review recommendations.

### **5. THE REPORT**

- 5.1 The Scrutiny Review report was considered by Council on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2019 and made a number of recommendations to improve the scrutiny function. The recommendations were developed following the Wales Audit Office report, 'Scrutiny Fit for the Future', the findings of the scrutiny self-evaluation questionnaire and the findings from the scrutiny workshop sessions.

- 5.2 The recommendations of the report were as follows:

- To change the names of Education for Life and Health Social Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny

Committees, so they reflect the terms of reference for the respective scrutiny committee and no longer refer to the former Caerphilly Community Strategy.

- **Option 3** - Increase the number of Scrutiny Committees to 5 to recognise the workloads in respect of Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee and Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee and create a Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee.
- To ensure that scrutiny committee Chairs and Vice Chairs are consulted on all reports to their respective scrutiny committee, in a timely fashion and where applicable, in order to allow them to ensure that the information requested by the scrutiny committee is included
- Further develop public engagement with the scrutiny process by use of social media and utilising the existing Council mechanisms and also consider options to webcast scrutiny committee meetings.
- Further develop scrutiny specific training - to be monitored by the Scrutiny Leadership Group, as follows:
  - Re-run the questioning skills training;
  - Develop E-learning opportunities and video wherever possible;
  - Develop E-learning opportunities and video wherever possible;
  - Advertise the wide range of scrutiny good practice guides;
  - Arrange further peer observations, or direct Members to webcasting of other councils' scrutiny committees;
  - Ensure the workshop feedback is considered when devising the next Member Induction Programme;
  - Wellbeing of Future Generations Workshop.
- Remove the Cabinet Member statement from Scrutiny Committee agendas with Cabinet Members presenting reports to scrutiny committee for their portfolio areas and answering questions on those reports, with the assistance of officers to answer technical queries.
- Include on scrutiny committee agendas a specific agenda item for the scrutiny committee to carry out policy development work.

5.3 In order to monitor the implementation of these recommendations an action plan has been developed and is attached at Appendix 1.

5.4 Progress has been made in a number of areas as follows:

5.4.1 To change the names of the scrutiny committees - this was implemented following the Annual General Meeting of council and the new Housing and Regeneration scrutiny committee was created and met for the first time on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2019. Significant effort was undertaken to re-align the work programmes to reflect the new terms of reference for affected scrutiny committees and also identify additional dates for the year ahead.

5.4.2 Contact has been made with the Communications Team to consider ways to enhance and develop the profile of scrutiny through the use of social media. The following actions have been identified as a way forward:

- To start promoting the Scrutiny "Get Involved" page, through Facebook and Twitter.
- Short videos (approx. 30/40 seconds) for Social Media recorded with Scrutiny Chairs – to outline the remit of their respective Committees and how people can engage with the process
- Scrutiny Staff liaise with Communications to publicise forthcoming items on Forward Work Programmes.
- A News Line article on the role of Scrutiny and how members of the public can engage with the process.

5.4.3 The report included several proposals for scrutiny training which included the following:

- Re-run the questioning skills training.
- Develop E-learning opportunities and video wherever possible.
- Offer a range of scrutiny function training to include work programmes.
- Advertise the wide range of scrutiny good practice guides already available from the WLGA and located on the Members Portal.
- Arrange further peer observations, or direct Members to webcasting of other councils' scrutiny committees.
- Ensure the feedback is considered when devising the next Member Induction Programme.
- Wellbeing of Future Generations Workshop.

5.4.4 Arrangements for the questioning skills training have commenced and it is proposed to tailor the session for scrutiny questioning and listening skills. All scrutiny committee members have been invited to express their interest in attending and every effort will be made to arrange the training times to suit those who wish to attend.

5.4.5 Planning for the scrutiny function training has also commenced with the intention to offer a series of short drop-in sessions, immediately before scrutiny committee pre-meetings. A list of topics will be circulated once they have been finalised and all committee members will be invited to participate.

5.4.6 Work has already commenced with regard to directing scrutiny committee members to relevant webcasts from other local authorities. The Scrutiny Officer has linked topics to agenda items planned for scrutiny committee meetings and also identified particular points of the webcast that may be of interest. It is planned to continue this until AGM 2020 when it can be reviewed. Arrangements to visit other local authorities could also be organised should there be sufficient interest.

5.4.7 The Wellbeing of Future Generations workshop was arranged for the 12<sup>th</sup> September 2019 and was offered to all scrutiny committee members. The session used the Framework for elected members devised by the Future Generations Commissioners Office and also included case studies. A further session targeted at Partnerships Scrutiny Committee is planned in January 2020 and will focus on scrutiny of the Public Services Board.

5.4.8 The Cabinet Members statement has been removed from the scrutiny committee agenda and Cabinet Members are now introducing all reports presented to scrutiny.

5.4.9 Policy Development work on committee agendas needs further development, the work programmes for 2019/20 were already completed when the scrutiny review recommendations were endorsed by Council. The Scrutiny Manager has been working to identify potential topics and will discuss this with Scrutiny committees. However Social Services Scrutiny Committee has commenced work on a Task and Finish Group to consider non-residential charging.

## 5.2 **Conclusion**

A number of recommendations have already been implemented, some are progressing and others are planned. SLG are asked to consider if sufficient progress has been made and also provide feedback on proposals.

## 6. **ASSUMPTIONS**

6.1 That the recommendations and actions set out in this report will address areas for improvement identified in the Wales Audit Office report, 'Scrutiny Fit for the Future' report, the findings of the scrutiny self-evaluation questionnaire and the findings from the scrutiny workshop sessions. However this is dependent upon Scrutiny Members participating and engaging with the training and support provided.

## **7. LINKS TO RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES**

7.1 The operation of scrutiny is a statutory function that ensures that members have the opportunity to properly scrutinise council policies including the Corporate Plan.

### **7.2 Corporate Plan 2018-2023.**

Objective 1 - Improve education opportunities for all

Objective 2 - Enabling employment

Objective 3 - Address the availability, condition and sustainability of homes throughout the county borough and provide advice, assistance or support to help improve people's well-being

Objective 4 - Promote a modern, integrated and sustainable transport system that increases opportunity, promotes prosperity and minimises the adverse impacts on the environment

Objective 5 - Creating a county borough that supports a healthy lifestyle in accordance with the sustainable Development Principle within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Objective 6 - Support citizens to remain independent and improve their well-being

## **8. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS**

8.1 The scrutiny review and action plan contribute to the following Well-being Goals within the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2016 by ensuring that scrutiny function has evaluated its effectiveness and identifies areas for improvement. An effective scrutiny function can ensure that council policies are scrutinised against the following goals:-

- A prosperous Wales\*
- A resilient Wales\*
- A healthier Wales\*
- A more equal Wales\*
- A Wales of cohesive communities\*
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language\*
- A globally responsible Wales\*

## **9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 The scrutiny self-evaluation questionnaire included questions on involving a wide range of evidence and perspectives, with a wide variety of internal and external stakeholders. The aim was to evaluate the scrutiny function and identify any further areas for improvement.

## **10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 Any financial commitment in respect of member training will be met from existing resources.

10.2 There may also be associated costs for webcasting of all scrutiny committee meetings that would have to be subject to a tender exercise. If there are any additional costs these will need to be funded by growth for 2020/21, with any in year additional costs being funded from corporate service reserves.

## **11. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 There are no personnel implications.

## **12. CONSULTATIONS**

12.1 This report has been sent to the Consultees listed below and all comments received are reflected in this report.

## **13. STATUTORY POWER**

13.1 Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000.

13.2 Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.

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Cllr James Pritchard, Chair Scrutiny Leadership Group  
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Background Papers:

Council 16<sup>th</sup> April 2019 Agenda Item 9

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Scrutiny Improvement Action Plan