

CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT PANEL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, TREDOMEN ON THURSDAY, 30TH SEPTEMBER 2004 AT 5P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor K.V. Reynolds – Chairman

Councillors:

Mrs C. Forehead, K. James, Miss A. Morgan, A.S. Williams and T.J. Williams

Together with:

J. Jones (Scrutiny Co-ordinator) and Miss S. Allen (Scrutiny Research Officer)

Also in attendance for agenda item 3:

Councillor D Poole (Cabinet Member for Performance Management), C. Jones (Head of Performance Management), Mrs L. Howse (Performance Development Officer), Mrs M. Abraham (Performance Management Officer)

1. APOLOGIES (Taken as agenda item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ms E.E. Forehead, D.M. Gray and Mrs R. Passmore.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES 21ST JULY 2004 (Taken as agenda item 3)

The Minutes were moved and approved as accurate. Mr J. Jones provided the following update on the actions arising from the previous meeting:

- **ACTION – Miss Allen to produce methodology statement for Task & Finish groups**
A first draft of this has been produced; the final draft will be presented at the next meeting of the Scrutiny Management Panel.
- **ACTION – Previously accepted Task and Finish group reports to be collated and monitored by the Scrutiny Support Unit**
This has been completed and is at agenda item 6.
- **ACTION – Scrutiny Support Unit to arrange training courses and inform members accordingly**
This has been done. Training dates were 16th, 17th and 24th September and all non-executive members of the Council were invited to attend.
- **ACTION – Mr Jones to arrange a presentation on Performance Management and the Wales Programme for Improvement**
The presentation was given earlier in the meeting.
- **ACTION – Members to comment on report to Mr Jones by Wednesday 28th July 2004**
Completed.

- **ACTION – Mr Jones to enquire into the existence of audit and inspection timetable and circulate if possible**

Councillor Passmore raised this item and has since spoken with Mr. David Hopkins regarding audit and inspection. Members were advised that there is no timetable available, but the relevant director could provide details.

- **ACTION – Miss Allen to liaise with Communications Department regarding these publications (members newsletter and Newline column)**

The first issue of the members' newsletter, 'Scrutiny Spotlight' has been produced and distributed to members this week. The Panel was informed that a Scrutiny column will feature in the next issue of Newline, and will outline the scrutiny process and the work of the Response Repairs and Country Parks Task and Finish Groups.

- **ACTION – Mr Jones to produce draft job descriptions to present at the next Scrutiny Management Panel**

This has been completed and is at agenda item 5.

3. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND CORVU PRESENTATION (Taken as agenda item 1)

Colin Jones, Head of Performance Management, gave a power-point presentation on performance management in the Council. A copy of the presentation is attached.

In relation to the presentation, Councillor T Williams stated that he would like to know the specific service areas under the remit of Technical Scrutiny Committee that are not improving. Councillor Reynolds agreed, and emphasised that, in future, such information should go to Scrutiny Committees for consideration.

Mr C. Jones agreed, and stated that he also believed detailed performance information should go to Scrutiny Committees, to allow members to scrutinise areas of concern. He further said that a detailed performance breakdown is available in the form of a risk assessment report that could be distributed to members of the Panel.

- **ACTION – Mr C. Jones to circulate risk assessment report to members**

Lisa Howse, Performance Development Officer, gave a demonstration of Corvu, a new performance management software package that rates the performance of each service area according to a traffic light system.

Mrs Howse used Environmental and Housing reports and hypothetical data to illustrate how Scrutiny Committees can use Corvu to identify problems in their service area, as all performance indicators specific to each scrutiny area are available on Corvu. When given a red traffic light rating, service providers must explain it and outline remedial action. The demonstration illustrated the potential for Scrutiny Committees to use Corvu to understand the reasons behind a red traffic light rating, and to question what can be done to improve performance in that particular area. The software also allows users to challenge meaningless performance data that has no comparative data e.g. "number of repairs completed" is a futile measure unless the number of repair requests made is also provided.

Councillor Reynolds suggested that Scrutiny Committee reports could be traffic light colour coded to match performance in the area they relate to, in order to help Committee members to easily identify areas of concern. Councillor Poole said this may prove problematic in relation to printing, but recognised that colour co-ordination of reports and performance would be extremely beneficial.

Mr J. Jones stated that it is vital to ensure that all Scrutiny Committees receive local and national performance data on a regular basis, and suggested this may be done

on a quarterly basis. Mr C. Jones suggested that in order to provide this data to members, a representative from the Performance Management department could attend Scrutiny Committees on a regular basis and give a Corvu presentation on performance issues appropriate to that meeting.

Councillor T. Williams queried whether Scrutiny Committees could have access to Corvu. Mrs Howse stated that it would be possible to set up dedicated software for each Scrutiny Committee. Mrs Abraham added that the long-term aim for the Performance Management department is for Corvu to be a regular feature in every Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor T. Williams asked about the auditing arrangements for the performance data on Corvu. Mrs Abraham stated that in addition to external audit by the Audit Commission, members of staff from the Performance Management Unit visit service areas and request evidence for performance figures and information provided in Corvu.

Mrs Abraham informed the group that Corvu also has a report writing capability, and that members of staff from Performance Management would be visiting Carmarthen Council on 1st October 2004 to find out more about the reports that Corvu generates, and hopefully employ this method of illustrating performance data in Caerphilly. Members agreed that such reports would be extremely useful in the scrutiny function.

Mrs Howse informed the group that Corvu is to be rolled out to all service areas, and that all performance indicators are put on Corvu.

Mr C. Jones stated that the regular scrutiny of performance indicators would help concentrate performance as a priority for staff. Councillor Reynolds stated that Corvu would be an excellent method of providing performance data to Scrutiny Committees as it is easily understandable and allows members to focus on problem areas. Mrs Howse stated that training would be provided to Chairs and Vice-Chairs to enable them to use Corvu in Scrutiny Committees.

Mr J. Jones suggested that he and Mr C. Jones could meet to discuss how scrutiny committees could play a more active role in assessing performance management data. The panel agreed this suggestion.

- **ACTION – Messrs J. Jones and C. Jones to produce a report on the role of Scrutiny Committees in assessing performance management data**

4. MODERNISATION WORKING GROUP

Mr J. Jones outlined the background to this issue. In December 2003 the Audit Commission gave a presentation to Council on their findings and recommendations. In response, the Council established a cross-party working group to discuss the implementation of these recommendations. On reflection, the group decided that it would be more appropriate to revisit this issue following the local elections held in June. On 28th August Council agreed to re-establish the working group.

Mr J. Jones informed members that a cross-party working group has now been established to consider the outstanding Audit Commission recommendations and recommend to Cabinet and Council any changes to the Council's constitution, and will conduct it's first meeting on October 6th.

Mr J. Jones stated that in addition to the 'Democratic Renewal' report, the Audit Commission also published similar recommendations in a report on 'Corporate Governance'. The National Assembly for Wales' Local Government and Public Services Committee also published a report considering the same issues 'The Operation of New Political Structures in Local Government', which has been

circulated to members. It is envisaged that the Modernisation Working Group will consider these reports also.

Mr J. Jones advised the group that the Audit Commission would hold several focus groups with members following the first meeting of the Modernisation Working Group to allow the views of all members to be fed into the modernisation process. The focus groups are scheduled as follows:

- CMT and Cabinet Focus Group – 26th October
- Scrutiny Management Panel Focus Group – 1st November
- 2 Non-Executive Member Focus Groups – 4th & 12th November
- Co-opted Scrutiny Committee Member Focus Group – 10th November

Mr J. Jones informed members that a single document encompassing the views and recommendations of these focus groups would then be produced in order to assist the Modernisation Working Group in their decision on how best to implement the recommendations in the reports.

Discussion took place in relation to the following aspects of the 'Democratic Renewal' report. Firstly, in relation to the prevention of Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Scrutiny Committees attending service meetings of senior management, Mr J. Jones stated that this was acceptable providing attendance is for information gathering purposes, not for decision-making. With regard to the recommendation that Scrutiny Committees should not discuss parochial issues, members agreed that day-to-day individual resident complaints should not be dealt with at Scrutiny Committees. However, the group also recognised that such complaints may be an example of borough-wide problems with a particular service. In this case, discussion by Scrutiny Committees was felt to be acceptable. Mr J. Jones stated that in order to achieve success in the scrutiny function, there must be a balance between performance and risk assessment issues and issues dear to members. Finally, Councillor Reynolds emphasised the need for pre-decision scrutiny, and stated that the report fails to place enough focus on this area.

Mr. J. Jones advised the Panel that they would be regularly updated as to the progress of the Modernisation Working Group.

- **ACTION – Scrutiny Support Unit to update the Scrutiny Management Panel at every meeting as to the work of the Modernisation Working Group**

In addition to these regular updates, Mr J. Jones said that prior to the Modernisation Working Group's final recommendations going to full Council, the Scrutiny Management Panel and members at large would be consulted.

Finally, the Panel was informed that any changes and recommendations made by the Modernisation Working Group would require changes to be made to the existing Council constitution, hopefully in line with the new Council year, May 2005.

Members approved the report.

5. JOB DESCRIPTIONS FOR CHAIRS AND VICE-CHAIRS OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

The Panel approved the draft job descriptions for Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Scrutiny Committees.

6. TASK AND FINISH GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

Miss Allen outlined the background to the issue. Members were reminded that at the previous meeting of the Scrutiny Management Panel, the need to monitor Task and Finish Group recommendations accepted by Cabinet was identified.

In response to this, Miss Allen explained the proposed monitoring system to members, whereby Service Directors would be required to complete an electronic table with the status of each recommendation relevant to their service area. This table would then be presented back to the appropriate Scrutiny Committee twice yearly. The Panel approved this course of action.

- **ACTION – Scrutiny Support Unit to provide all service directors with the electronic recommendations table and explain procedure for feedback to Scrutiny Committees**

Councillor Reynolds requested that in addition the updated tables should also be referred to the Scrutiny Management Panel twice yearly for information. Members agreed this.

- **ACTION – Status report on Task and Finish Group recommendations to be presented to Scrutiny Committees and Scrutiny Management Panel on a twice yearly basis**

7. CABINET FORWARD PROGRAMME – VERBAL REPORT

Mr J. Jones advised the group that discussions have taken place regarding the tabulation of the Cabinet Forward Work Programme, and that Directors had been asked to put all pending work into this format. This will allow members to easily identify any key decisions to be taken by Cabinet over the subsequent 4-month period, therefore accommodating pre-decision scrutiny. Mr J. Jones said that the new style forward programme would hopefully come into effect with the new Council year in May 2005, and would be publicly available on the Internet.

Mr J. Jones stated that this new work programme format and the introduction of performance management into scrutiny would give Scrutiny Committees a more meaningful agenda and allow the views of members to be heard by Cabinet prior to decisions being made.

Councillor Morgan stated that this pre-decision scrutiny was vital, especially in relation to the introduction of pilot schemes, to allow local members to express their views. Specifically, Councillor Morgan queried the Blackwood 'One Stop Shop' initiative. Mr. J. Jones stated that he would ask the relevant officer to attend the next available Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee with a progress report on this pilot initiative.

- **ACTION – Mr J. Jones to liaise with Mr D. Titley and request that a review of this scheme goes to the next available Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee for discussion**

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next Scrutiny Management Panel is 11th November 2004, at 5pm in Committee Room 4.

Miss Allen suggested that the following meeting, scheduled for 22nd December 2004, be rearranged to the previous week due to its close proximity to Christmas. Members agreed.

- **ACTION – Miss Allen to reschedule December Scrutiny Management Panel and update members at the next meeting of the Scrutiny Management Panel**

Mr J. Jones suggested that a copy of the papers for the Scrutiny Management Panel be placed in the Members Library for information. Councillors agreed that all agendas, backing papers and minutes should be available to other members. Councillor Tom Williams emphasised the fact that openness and transparency is key to the scrutiny process, and as such these documents should be made available.

- **ACTION – Miss Allen to place Scrutiny Management Panel papers in the Members Library for information**