



## SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT PANEL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, TREDOMEN  
ON THURSDAY, 16TH JUNE 2005 AT 5.00 PM

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PRESENT:

Councillor K.V. Reynolds - Chairman

Councillors:

R.T. Davies, Mrs. C. Forehead, D.M. Gray, K. James, A. Morgan, A.S. Williams and  
T.J. Williams

Together with:

T. Peppin (Head of Policy and Central Services), J. Jones (Scrutiny Co-Ordinator)

### APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Ms. E. E. Forehead and S. Allen (Scrutiny Research Officer).

#### 1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES 17TH MARCH 2005 AND MATTERS ARISING

The Minutes were moved and approved as accurate. Mr Jones stated that all outstanding actions had been completed:

- **ACTION – Mr G George to circulate Committee timetable up to August 2006 to members prior to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Management Panel.**  
The 2005/2005 Committee timetable has now been distributed.
- **ACTION – Scrutiny Support Unit to present the views and suggestions of the Scrutiny Management Panel to Corporate Management Team.**  
The views of the Scrutiny Management Panel on budget monitoring at Scrutiny Committees will accompany a presentation on the implementation and effect of the changes to scrutiny at a forthcoming meeting of Corporate Management Team.
- **ACTION – Mr Jones to remove the time limit on Cabinet members oral reports and question and answer sessions at Scrutiny Committee meetings from the report.**  
This has been completed.
- **ACTION – Mr Jones to remove the proposal to publish time allocations on agenda items for Scrutiny Committee meetings from the report.**  
This has been completed.

- **ACTION – Mr Jones to clarify the procedure for calling forward ‘for information’ items for discussion at Scrutiny Committee meetings**  
This has been completed.
- **ACTION – Mr Jones to speak to Mr I Medicott with regard to including the role of Council in Task and Finish Group reviews in the constitution**  
This has been completed.
- **ACTION – Mr Jones to inform the Modernisation Working Group that the Scrutiny Management Panel does not support the proposal to consider the political balance of Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Scrutiny Committees**  
This has been completed.
- **ACTION – Scrutiny Support Unit to discuss the issue of the implementation of Task and Finish Group recommendations at Corporate Management Team to ensure the completion of all progress tables**  
The views of the Scrutiny Management Panel on Task and Finish Group recommendations will accompany a presentation on the implementation and effect of the changes to scrutiny at a forthcoming meeting of Corporate Management Team.
- **ACTION – Miss Allen to schedule future meetings of the Scrutiny Management Panel to the end of 2005 and inform members accordingly**  
This has been completed.

Members suggested that the future minutes of the Scrutiny Management Panel be numbered by page to facilitate discussion.

- **ACTION – Future minutes of SMP to be page numbered**

## 2. PRESENTATION – THE EFFECT OF CHANGES TO THE SCRUTINY FUNCTION

Mr Jones delivered a presentation to the group on the changes to scrutiny, which had been developed and subsequently agreed by members at full council on 17th May 2005. Members were informed that the changes aimed to give scrutiny committees a meaningful and strategic role, to increase openness and transparency and to re-engage members in the process.

The main changes were outlined as follows:

### (i) Scrutiny Committee Portfolios

- Scrutiny Committees will be realigned along the four themes of the community strategy. In addition, Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee will remain as the Council's principle overview committee with responsibility for the scrutiny of the Chief Executive's Directorate and the overarching principles of the community strategy.
- The revised committee structure is set out below:  
Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee  
Education for Life Scrutiny Committee  
Health, Social Care & Well-Being Scrutiny Committee  
Living Environment Scrutiny Committee  
Regeneration Scrutiny Committee

**(ii) Better Performance Management Arrangements**

- A specific performance management meeting will be held in April/May each year to discuss two or three priorities contained in the annual risk assessment, service improvement plans or cabinet priorities. Scrutiny committees will monitor progress made in taking forward these issues during the course of the year.
- Performance Management Unit will present performance management data to scrutiny committees, using the 'Corvu' software package.
- Scrutiny Committees will receive reports from the Performance Development Group.

**(iii) Improved Openness and Transparency**

- The Cabinet Forward Work Programme provides the dates that reports will be presented for pre-decision scrutiny, and is published on a 12-weekly cycle.
- In addition to an annual programme of work, from September 2005 Scrutiny Committees will publish detailed work programmes in line with the Cabinet Forward Work Programme on a 12-weekly cycle.
- Delegated decisions taken by officers at Head of Service level and above must be published on the intranet, with certain decisions being subject to call-in.

**(iv) Strategic Forward Work Programmes**

- Forward work programmes will concentrate on the strategic corporate agenda contained in the Community Strategy, Corporate Improvement Plan, Service Improvement Plans and Cabinet Forward Work Programme.

**(v) Strengthened Consultation Arrangements**

- Cabinet will consult Scrutiny Committees on all 'key decisions' contained in the Cabinet Forward Programme.
- Key issues for consultation include those:
  - Of a strategic or controversial nature.
  - Which may have a significant effect on the delivery of council services.
  - Which have a significant element of risk or financial implications.
- Scrutiny Committees will involve partners and stakeholders in discussions about important local issues.
- Meetings of full Council will be used to debate options for change early in the process of reviewing or developing the Council's most important policies and services.

**(vi) New Roles for Cabinet Members**

- Cabinet members will give a verbal report at each Scrutiny Committee meeting outlining their main activities since the last meeting and update members on the status of any big issues facing the Council. This will be followed by a question and answer session with committee members.
- In line with the Cabinet Forward Work Programme cabinet members will make statements to inform scrutiny committees the reports coming forward for pre-decision scrutiny.
- Cabinet members will also share responsibility with officers for presenting reports to committees and answering questions.

**(vii) Strengthened Arrangements for Member Reviews**

- Our partners and other key stakeholders will be invited to take part in Task and Finish Group Reviews.
- Member Review Groups will be introduced for small teams of members (between 2 and 4 from more than one political group) to undertake a brief examination of a discrete part of a particular service. Member Review Groups will be supported by the Scrutiny Support Unit and must report back to scrutiny committees within 12 weeks.

**(viii) New Format for Scrutiny Committee Meetings**

- The format of scrutiny committee meetings is being changed to encourage better debate.
- To promote more constructive debate, scrutiny committee meetings will be held in committee room 1 and 2, whenever possible.
- Members and officers will sit together, however, if there is a shortage of seats, Scrutiny Committees will meet in 'Cabinet Style' with officers sitting at the committee table only to present reports and answer questions.
- Scrutiny Committees will discuss fewer but more important items of business, and Scrutiny Committee agendas will be focussed towards the Council's strategic documents.
- A new 'for information' item will be added to committee agendas where reports are presented without discussion.

**(ix) Changes to the Call-in Procedure**

- All delegated decisions made by the Chief Executive, Directors and Heads of Service must be published on the record of decisions application, available on the Intranet. Subject to certain exceptions, all delegated executive decisions made by the Chief Executive, Directors and Heads of Service are subject to the call-in procedure.
- The call-in period for Cabinet decisions expires at 5.00pm on the Monday following the date of the decision.
- The call-in period for delegated officer decisions expires at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> working day following the date the decision is published on the Intranet.
- A call-in based on the criteria of 'inadequate consultation' or 'didn't take something into account' may, in certain circumstances, not be considered as a valid if there is documentary evidence to the contrary.

The Scrutiny Management Panel welcomed the changes to the scrutiny function as means of strengthening scrutiny in the Authority.

### **3. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2005 – 2006**

Mr Jones outlined the background to the report. Members were informed that Scrutiny Committee's forward work programmes were traditionally developed annually at the start of each Council year, and only provided a brief outline of some of the reports that were expected to come forward to Scrutiny Committees.

Mr Jones stated that in light of the changes to scrutiny and in order to contribute to the Council's strategic forward agenda (namely the Community Strategy, Corporate Improvement Plan, Wales programme for Improvement and the Cabinet Forward Work Programme), the current method of forward work programme needed to be revised.

The Panel was informed that the production of the Cabinet Forward Work Programme on a 12-weekly cycle had proved to be a successful method of forecasting future decisions. Mr Jones proposed that in addition to the skeleton annual work programme, detailed Scrutiny Committee forward programmes of work be published on a 12-weekly basis.

Members agreed that this method of forward planning be adopted from September 2005.

- **ACTION – In addition to the annual forward programmes of work, from September 2005 detailed Scrutiny Forward Work Programmes are to be published by the Scrutiny Support Unit**

## **5. REVIEW OF SCRUTINY 2004 – 2005**

Mr Jones outlined the background to the report. He informed the group that the Council's constitution requires the production of an annual report reviewing the work of each Scrutiny Committee.

The main achievements in the scrutiny function over the past year were summarised as follows:

- (i) The Scrutiny Support Unit gained autonomy from Committee Services from 1st April 2004, and additional funding provided for the appointment of a permanent full-time Scrutiny Research Officer to further strengthen the support for scrutiny.
- (ii) The Scrutiny Management Panel was established in July 2004 to assist the development of the scrutiny function.
- (iii) Via the cross-party Modernisation Working Group and through the contributions of members and officers more widely, changes to the scrutiny function which address the recommendations contained in the Audit Commission Report 'Democratic Renewal' have been agreed, and will be implemented on 5th July 2005.

Members agreed that the scrutiny function has gone from strength to strength since April 2004, and noted the continued development of the scrutiny function.

## **6. DISTRIBUTION OF CHAIRS AND VICE-CHAIRS IN WELSH LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Mr Jones outlined the background to the report. Members were reminded that in recent weeks there had been considerable debate between members with regard to the distribution of Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Council committees. The report presented outlined the status of other Welsh authorities with regard to this issue.

In summary, the Panel was informed that of 16 comparable Local Authorities in Wales (i.e. those with single party or coalition ruling groups with overall control), 6 allocated chairs exclusively within the ruling group.

Members noted the report, which was presented for information only.

## **7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

With regard to the use of IT equipment, Cllr Morgan informed the group that she is currently awaiting the delivery of a laptop computer, and as such would soon be online. Cllr C. Forehead stated that although she had a laptop, it was at of use at that time and was awaiting repair.

**8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next Scrutiny Management Panel is 28th July 2005, at 5.00 pm in Committee Room 4.