



## SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT PANEL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, DUFFRYN HOUSE,  
DUFFRYN BUSINESS PARK, YSTRAD MYNACH ON  
THURSDAY, 6TH JULY 2006 AT 5.00 PM

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PRESENT:

Councillor K.V. Reynolds – Chairman

Councillors:

D Poole, C. Forehead, K. James, Ms E.E. Forehead, D.M. Gray, B Toomer and T.J. Williams

Together with:

N Barnett (Director of Corporate Services), T Peppin (Head of Policy and Central Services), J. Jones (Scrutiny Co-ordinator), C. Jones (Head of Performance Management), and C. Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Research Officer).

### 1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors, R.T. Davies, Ms A. Morgan and J Bevan.

### 2. INTRODUCTIONS

Chair welcomed Councillor B Toomer and Nigel Barnett to their first meeting of the Scrutiny Management Panel.

### 3. REVIEW OF THE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETINGS – VERBAL REPORT

Councillor D Poole introduced the subject and emphasised the need the importance of the SMP having a debate about the effectiveness of the last round of performance management meetings. While Colin would provide a summary of the meetings, Cllr Poole asked members to consider how the subject matter for future performance management meetings should be chosen. In particular, who should be involved in selection process would be critical; for example, chairs and vice chairs, officers, or a combination of both.

Colin Jones added that the last round of meetings has been a learning experience with some practice to take forward, however, there was still room for improvement. The following examples were given:

- Some presentations relied too heavily on information being given to members in presentation format only. This resulted in members having a poor view and losing the focus of the meeting.
- There were examples of good questioning, however, supplementary questioning was not always followed up. It was suggested that Chairs and Vice Chairs could ensure lines of questioning are followed up where necessary.

- There were too many items on the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing agenda. In future, the agreed meeting format should be used consistently.
- Three agenda items were presented together at Education for Life scrutiny committee. It was felt that this did not encourage debate.
- The Policy and Resources meeting worked well as the agreed agenda format was observed and questions were asked encouraged during presentation.
- At one meeting the Performance Indicators were presented to a Committee but were then dismissed by the officer.

In conclusion, Colin Jones felt that overall the format worked well but future meetings could be improved by ensuring agendas were followed consistently.

Cllr K Reynolds asked Members to give their feedback on how the meetings went.

Councillor Tom Williams stated that how the topic is selected, needs to be addressed. He felt that the Chairs and Vice Chairs needed to be more closely involved with performance management in order that they could identify issues to be brought forward to performance management meetings. Councillor D M Gray agreed with Cllr Williams' comments.

Councillor Christine Forehead felt it was important for the Chair and Vice Chair to be involved in choosing future topics with the Director.

Councillor K James stated that he was involved through the briefing sessions he attends with the Director of Social Services. He did feel however that there was too much information at some of the performance management meetings. Cllr James said that dealing with performance management in this way was a new innovation and that they will improve over time. Councillor Dave Poole confirmed that Cabinet sets targets at a corporate level. The scrutiny committee's role is to challenge targets, including challenging targets which members believe are either too high or too low.

Councillor B Toomer stated that she would like the performance indicators and actual performance information to be sent out before the meeting. This would allow Members to better understand the information prior to the meeting and prevent them from being too long.

Mr Nigel Barnett stated that there are only 2 performance management meetings per year, which means that capacity for this subject is very limited. The present custom and practice was for services to report on both areas doing well and otherwise, however, he wondered whether it would be better to report difficult issues only. Turning to the issue of choosing topics for future discussion, Mr Barnett agreed that members should be involved in that process

Mr T Peppin suggested that exception reports could be sent to scrutiny committees. Service Improvement Plan monitoring reports could identify where targets are not met and this would assist in identifying topics for performance management meetings. Colin Jones stated that the Performance Management Team could inform Chairs and Vice Chairs where there are concerns.

Mr Barnett stated that access to the Performance Information System for Members would also assist in identifying hot spots. Cllr Poole said there is a need to make sure there is a protocol for opening up PIMs for Members.

It was agreed that:

- Chairs and Vice-Chairs will be involved in the selection of topics for future Performance Management Meetings.
- Performance Management Team to provide next SMP with an example of the issues that could be identified through exception reporting.

#### **4. CHAIRING SKILLS TRAINING**

Jonathan Jones informed the meeting that Simon Baddeley from INLOGOV delivered the training on the 23 June 2006. This was arranged jointly with Rhondda Cynon Taff. J Jones highlighted a few key messages from on the day:

- Scrutiny seen as core part of the organisation

- Scrutiny should be viewed as a critical friend
- Scrutiny must be member led
- Meeting management – pre-briefings should be held without officers.

Councillor K Reynolds asked if there were any comments from Members. It was felt that although the day was enjoyable the facilitator should have encouraged more discussion. Councillor Toomer thought that the 15 Minutes pre-briefing might be worth trying. Councillor K Reynolds agreed that it would be trialled at the next Policy and Resources Meeting.

**Action: The next Policy and Resources meeting on the 25 July 2006 will begin with a 15-minute member agenda-planning meeting.**

## 5. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Mr T Peppin stated that this is a very important part of how the council works. It allows the opportunity for Cabinet and Scrutiny work programmes to complement one another and promote transparency.

The new arrangements have been developed to allow better co-ordination between Scrutiny and Cabinet. The main features include:

- Cabinet forward work programmes will be published fortnightly on a 4 meeting cycle rolling programme.
- Committee Services Officers and the Scrutiny Research Officer will attend Directorate Management Team Meetings to improve customer care.
- Cabinet and Scrutiny forward work programmes will be published on the intranet and internet.
- The deadline for receipt of draft reports by committee services will be standardised to noon on Mondays
- A leaflet is being prepared which sets out the new procedure for officers.

Mr Barnett stated that officers are generally not very good at planning, we need to get away from the previous practice of rushing reports and become involved in forward work planning for scrutiny. It is important to see what is coming ahead.

**Action: Members agreed to endorse the report.**

## 6. ROLE OF CHAIRS AND VICE CHAIRS

Mr J Jones brought this back to the SMP because he was aware that Cllr B Toomer and Cllr J Bevan have recently been appointed as Vice Chairs. Mr J Jones is also working on the members' development charter with John Fairfax. This will involve a great deal of co-ordination and work before the WLGA carry out their inspection. Role descriptions are required for certain member roles such as Chairs and vice chairs of committees.

**Action: Members endorsed the role descriptions.**

## 7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

## 8. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is to be arranged.