



SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT PANEL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, DYFFRYN HOUSE ON WEDNESDAY, 17TH OCTOBER 2007 AT 5.00 PM

PRESENT:

Councillor K.V. Reynolds - Chairman

Councillors:

K. James, R.T. Davies, E. Aldworth and B. Toomer.

Together with:

T. Peppin (Head of Policy and Democratic Services), Jonathan Jones (Scrutiny Co-ordinator), Colin Jones (Head of Performance Management) and C. Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Research Officer).

APOLOGIES

Councillors C Forehead, E Forehead, J Bevan, D.M. Gray, N Dix and T Williams

1. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 5th July 2007 were approved as an accurate record.

Matters Arising

Mr J Jones stated that he has met with Dan Perkins to seek advice regarding the issue of allowing debate on matters arising from minutes at Scrutiny Committee meetings. It was agreed that the Chair's role is to encourage debate and discussion should be allowed at the Chair's discretion.

Members discussed whether the scrutiny committee agenda should be amended to include a 'matters arising' item but concluded that the current arrangements should continue.

Mr J Jones also informed the meeting that he has discussed with Dan Perkins the delegated decisions application as the Scrutiny Annual Report contained a recommendation to the improve reporting of decisions by officers. A second meeting to discuss how awareness can be raised will take place shortly.

Dr T Peppin informed the meeting that the Local Service Board will be meeting on 22 October 2007. The LSB feel that their role is to intervene only there is a blockage in service delivery. The role of the LSB is evolving and Local Service Board priorities should be in place by the end of the year.

2. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Mr Colin Jones suggested that the spring performance management meetings should focus on the Service Improvement Plans and the autumn meetings be a follow up to give an update on actions plans and targets. To date, responses from Directors on which services are being brought to the autumn meetings is slow. Mr C Jones asked if Chairs could speak to their Directors in order to identify which service area is being brought forward.

It has already been agreed that the Policy and Resources Performance Management meeting will be on Procurement Services. Mr Jones suggested that the Health Social Care and Well Being Performance Management Meeting could look at progress in implementing the CSSIW report.

Councillor K Reynolds stated that some departments have a large number of services and there might be a large gap between service areas appearing at Performance Management meetings. Councillor R T Davies queried whether it might be appropriate for Scrutiny Chairs to decide which service areas should be brought forward, for example Estyn Reports for Education for Life Scrutiny committee.

Members agreed that this process is new to officers and agreed that committees should continue to concentrate on specific service areas. Councillor K Reynolds asked if a programme of performance management meetings should be considered. Mr C Jones stated that flexibility is needed to ensure that committees could react to changes in circumstance or be able to see a poorly performing service more than once.

Mr C Jones suggested an alternative venue for the meetings and asked if members would agree to use the training room at Tredomen.

Action: Chairs to speak to Directors to agree service areas for Performance Management meetings.

Action: Mr C Jones and Mr J Jones to check on facilities at Tredomen training room for Performance Management meetings.

3. MEMBER DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

Mr J Jones introduced the report, which outlines the key messages from the WLGA Member Development Conference held in Llandudno in June 2007.

Mr Jones stated that there had been a number of national policy and research reports published over the last year which would have a direct effect on the operation of scrutiny. The conference explored some of these issues including.

Jessica Crowe Executive Director, Centre for Public Scrutiny gave a presentation and focussed upon:

- Scrutiny Committees and engagement
- Local Service Boards
- Member Leadership and Engagement roles

Mr Roger Turner, Chair of Overview and Scrutiny at Rhondda Cynon Taff gave a presentation on external scrutiny and working collaboratively with partners.

Mr J Jones outlined the main outcomes of the delegate workshops and asked members to give their priorities to build into the Scrutiny Support Unit's future work programme.

Councillor K Reynolds asked about the external scrutiny arrangements in England. Mr Jones stated that it only applies to the scrutiny of the NHS and is a more adversarial process to the partnership arrangements with LHBs operating in Wales.

As yet the Welsh Assembly Government have not made clear whether the anticipated external scrutiny powers will be limited to all public bodies or, extended more widely to public service providers. There is an important difference between the two definitions as only public bodies such as the NHS trusts would be caught by the former definition. The wider definition includes important public service organisations such as housing associations and train and bus operators.

Councillor R T Davies expressed concern that scrutiny is already fully occupied with internal services, expanding to include external services would have a significant impact. Mr Jones stated that capacity would have to be built into the process and training and protocols developed to give members and external organisations confidence in the process.

Councillor K James agreed that there are some good points in the report on external scrutiny but the internal scrutiny must be working effectively before we look to exercise external scrutiny.

Mr J Jones stated that the WLGA are developing a leadership academy for scrutiny chairs, which will be rolled out after the local government elections in May 2008. This will look at the role of chairs and provide support for their extended role.

4. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None

5. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on 13th December 2007 in Committee Room 1, Dyffryn House at 5.00 pm.