



SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT PANEL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, DYFFRYN HOUSE ON WEDNESDAY, 9TH JANUARY 2008 AT 5.00 PM

PRESENT:

Councillor K.V. Reynolds – Chairman

Councillors:

R.T. Davies, Mrs. E. Aldworth, Mrs. C. Forehead, Miss E. Forehead, J. Bevan, T. Williams and Mrs. B. Toomer

Together with:

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

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D.M. Gray, N. Dix and K. James.

1. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 17th October 2007 were approved as an accurate record.

2. MATTERS ARISING

Delegated Decisions – Councillor Reynolds asked for an update on progress being made to improve the use by officers of the decisions application. Mr. J. Jones informed members that work was on going with Legal to clarify what decisions should be published.

Local Service Board – Councillor J Bevan asked if the criteria for membership of the LSB's, particularly Town and Community Councillor representatives. Mr. C. Jones explained that Caerphilly LSB has a core group consisting of: Caerphilly County Borough Council, Gwent Police, GAVO, Caerphilly Local Health Board and a senior WAG official. Other organisations would be invited to attend meetings as and when required. Councillor K. Reynolds stated that the LSB in Caerphilly is a pilot and membership is being kept small in the first instance in order to reduce hold-ups and ensure that decisions are made.

Councillor K. Reynolds suggested that the Leader and/or Chief Executive are invited to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Management Panel to give members an update on the role and work being done by the LSB.

Action- Invite Leader and Chief Executive to next meeting of Scrutiny Management Panel

3. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Mr. C. Jones stated that arrangements for the last round of Performance Management scrutiny meetings had been inconsistent. However, that said overall the meetings were good and the new venue helped in terms of the presentation of PIMs information. He outlined the performance at each Scrutiny Committee:

Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee – Considered procurement and members asked challenging questions about non-compliance which had resulted in further reports being presented to the Scrutiny Committee.

Living Environment Scrutiny Committee – Considered Private Sector Housing where PIMs was presented very effectively by officers and members positively challenged the information given. This resulted in a request for officers to look at some indicators again.

Regeneration Scrutiny Committee – This meeting looked at a WAO report on highways investment which had been presented by the WAO. There was some good information and questions from members.

Education for Life Scrutiny Committee – This meeting strayed from the established format and was presented with information from ESIS on school attainment. The levels of questioning were good and members challenged well. There was also a report on libraries from Peter Gomer.

Health Social Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee – The performance management meeting was postponed until February 2008 to allow CSSIW to present their annual report.

Members were agreed that the PIMS system was a valuable tool in gaining a better understanding of the issues faced by services. In particular, members thought the consistent approach of using PIMS was beginning to show benefits in terms of members increased understanding of performance management and their ability to challenge services. Members welcomed CMT's commitment to continuing the use of PIMS, however, they also acknowledged that there may be different approaches from time to time e.g. CSSIW's annual report being presented to the next HSC&WB PM meeting.

Councillor R. Davies stated that he felt that although the Education Scrutiny Committee was good it could have been better if the PIMs system had been used.

Mr. C. Jones stated that members are keen on PIMs due to the transparency of PIMs. The system makes it easier for members to ask questions and compare the performance of services.

Councillor Reynolds stated that Chairs and Vice Chairs should become involved in choosing topics for performance management meetings.

Mr. C. Jones informed the meeting that the next round of performance management meetings will be slightly different because of the election and consist of Mr. C. Jones giving an explanation of performance management and Directors outlining the main challenges facing their directorates.

4. SCRUTINY SKILLS TRAINING

Mr. J. Jones stated that he thought it useful to bring forward this report in order to link into work from the Members Charter.

Mr. J. Jones and Mr. J. Fairfax recently met with the WLGA to discuss a targeted scrutiny training and development programme based on the outcomes of members training needs analysis and annual performance reviews for scrutiny chairs and vice chairs. The WLGA had offered to support this initiative by providing training sessions on 'Advanced Chairing Skills' and 'Key Scrutiny Skills' free of charge. In addition the WLGA are planning a 2 day Leadership Academy for Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs in summer 2008 and early 2009. Two representatives from each council will be invited.

Councillor Reynolds stated that he would like to see the training available to all Chairs and Vice Chairs. Mr. C. Jones suggested asking WLGA to hold an Academy just for Caerphilly. Mr. J. Jones that the WLGA have indicated that they would prefer to have a mix of authorities, but we could try to arrange with another authority.

Members stated that the performance interview process had been successful and identified a number of training needs. They discussed the training programme detailed in the report and commented on:

- The Length of time required for training courses needs to be considered.
- Need to ensure that good quality courses are offered.
- The inclusion of budget training was welcomed.
- Workshop type learning can be useful and is opportunity to meet with other members.

Councillor T. Williams raised the need to include budget-monitoring reports on a regular basis to Scrutiny Committees and the need for member training to improve skills in interpreting this data.

Mr. C. Jones stated that he has recommended to departments that PIMs scorecards include budget information and staff turnover.

Councillor K. Reynolds stated that he recently attended a meeting to discuss external scrutiny where it was agreed that Local Authorities need to get their internal scrutiny working properly before extending to external scrutiny. He expressed his thanks to officers for their assistance during this process.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be arranged to allow the Chief Executive and Leader to attend.