



SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT PANEL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE ON WEDNESDAY,
2ND APRIL 2008 AT 5.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor K.V. Reynolds – Chairman

Councillors:

R.T. Davies, E. Aldworth C. Forehead, J. Bevan, D.M. Gray, T. Williams, K. James and H. Andrews.

Together with:

Stuart Rosser (Chief Executive), Jonathan Jones (Scrutiny Co-ordinator), Colin Jones (Head of Performance and Policy) and Catherine Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Research Officer).

1. APOLOGIES

Councillors N. Dix and E. Forehead.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2008 were approved as an accurate record.

Matters Arising:

Delegated Decisions – Jonathan Jones informed the meeting that Dan Perkins has circulated an email to staff to remind them to update the delegated decisions on the Council's Internet page, this has been checked and more decisions have since been input.

3. LOCAL SERVICE BOARDS

Councillor K. Reynolds explained that this was put onto the agenda following discussion at the last SMP meeting, when it was agreed to invite Councillor H Andrews and Mr. Stuart Rosser. He welcomed and thanked them for their attendance and invited them to speak.

Councillor Andrews stated that the Welsh Assembly Government set up the Local Service Boards in order to improve the relationships between partners. The WAG invited Sir Jeremy Beecham to review public service delivery in Wales and as part of this process Sir Jeremy visited Caerphilly. The outcome of his report was the launch of the LSB programme and Caerphilly was chosen to run a pilot LSB along with 5 other Welsh authorities.

The shadow LSB was put into place in June 2007 and consists of the LHB, Gwent Police, GAVO, WAG, Chief Executive of CCBC and the Leader of CCBC. A conscious decision was made to keep the LSB to a small manageable group with others involved as and when required.

The LSB identified the following objectives:

- Health and Social Care Resource Centre serving the north of the borough
- Promoting Positive Mental Health project
- Children with Disabilities and their Families
- Information sharing
- Performance Management of the 'Whole System' of community planning
- Citizen Engagement.

Stuart Rosser stated that the Council had a proud record of working in collaboration with partners via the standing conference, which had been established to lead the implementation of the Community Strategy. The LSB were able to use the Community Strategy as a starting point to identify their priorities. He reassured the meeting that Caerphilly County Borough Council would not commit to significant decisions without observing the usual internal decision making processes.

Councillor Bevan expressed concern that local Town and Community Councillors were not represented on the LSB. Councillor Andrews explained that many organisations had asked for membership of the LSB, however, he assured members that all relevant partner organisations would be asked to contribute as and when necessary.

Stuart Rosser stated that at the present time the LSB were dealing with strategic issues, which did not directly affect individual towns or community councils. Councillor James said that he thought the size of the LSB seems right and did not wish to see it expanded. It is a professional strategic group that would be in danger of becoming too parochial if made larger.

Councillor Bevan asked to see copies of the LSB minutes. Stuart Rosser stated that to date copies of the LSB minutes had not been made publically available, however, now that the LSB was established the minutes could be made available in the future. Mr Rosser said he would consider the best way of distributing the minutes, either via cabinet or scrutiny.

Jonathan Jones informed members that a meeting was held earlier in the week with the other shadow LSB authorities and gave an overview of the main issues discussed.

Action: Copy of LSB minutes where the Resource Centre for North was discussed to Councillor Bevan.

4. SEATING ARRANGEMENTS

Jonathan Jones asked for comments from members on the seating arrangements for Scrutiny committees. The main issues raised were:

- The acoustics in the Rhymney Room are not ideal; some members are finding it difficult to hear.
- The majority of Chairs would like to sit in the centre of the room.
- Cabinet had found sound travels between the Sirhowy and Ebbw rooms.
- Could the table in the Rhymney room be made smaller?

Stuart Rosser stated that although the acoustics in the Rhymney room may need to be enhanced by a portable sound system, it otherwise worked well for scrutiny committees.

5. WLGA GUIDANCE: DEVELOPING A SCRUTINY CULTURE

Jonathan Jones informed the meeting that the WLGA, in partnership with a number of scrutiny officers, had produced a best practice guide on developing a scrutiny culture. It is not a prescriptive guide and each authority should interpret the content according to their own structure and systems. The members discussed the guidance and raised the following points:

- Appendix 1 point 10 (overview and scrutiny have dedicated research support from independent officer) is useful, in particular, for new members.
- There is room for improvement with financial information presented to Scrutiny Committee.
- Scrutiny has improved in last few years and the training planned for the autumn will help to improve scrutiny further.
- Some members are still raising local issues at meetings.
- Bringing in outside organisations to scrutiny can be beneficial and is a bold step; examples include ESIS and CSSIW.
- Scrutiny committees will develop the external scrutiny of other public sector organisations, however, most members do not yet feel confident in this role.
- SMP has pushed forward progress of scrutiny in past 4 years.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To be determined.