



SCRUTINY LEADERSHIP GROUP

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT TY PENALLTA, YSTRAD MYNACH,
ON TUESDAY, 17TH DECEMBER 2013 AT 5.00 P.M.**

PRESENT:

Councillors:

Ms. L. Ackerman, Mrs. E. Aldworth, W. David, D.T. Davies, D. Havard, Mrs. B. Jones (Acting Chair), C. Mann; D. Preece

Together with:

J. Jones (Democratic Services Manager), C. Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Research Officer)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors H. David (Chair), D. Rees, Mrs. J. Summers and Mrs. C. Forehead.

2. CHAIR

In the absence of the Chair, Cllr B Jones was nominated and endorsed as acting Chair for the duration of the meeting.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at the commencement or during the course of the meeting.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

4. Role of Scrutiny Leadership Group

Officers outlined the report and explained that the establishment of the Scrutiny Leadership Group (SLG) was included in the Scrutiny Improvement Action Plan report to Council on the 8th October 2013. The Governance approved by Council earlier in the year requires that all new Committee's, Panels and Groups would receive training on their terms of reference at the first meeting.

Officers explained that the SLG is made up of Chairs and Vice Chairs of Scrutiny, Audit and Democratic Services Committees and the aim of the group is to allow Chairs to be more proactive in overseeing the scrutiny function. The priorities of the group are to manage the forward work programmes, the work of task and finish groups and ensure a balance of reports from Directorates, Members and the Public.

Members raised concerns with inconsistencies of communication to local ward members on issues affecting their local area, as this can affect the number of report requests from members at scrutiny. A member highlighted a recent example of a road closure that would have a significant impact on a school and sheltered housing complex, which was not brought to the attention of the local ward member. Members also raised concerns that there are inconsistencies with reporting of delegated decisions and asked for a report on compliance.

Members queried the position of chairing of task and finish groups. Officers confirmed that the Chair and Vice Chair of the Scrutiny committee can sit on the task and finish group but cannot chair the group.

Officers stated that SLG would have an important role in forward work planning. In particular, an important role for Chairs and Vice Chairs will be to consider if external witnesses would be beneficial to aid Scrutiny Committee's deliberations.

Members discussed how SLG could promote public engagement, and acknowledged it is very difficult to achieve. Officers stated that the intention is to publicise the FWP on social media and invite the public and stakeholders to give written views and/or attend to give oral evidence on appropriate issues. It was also acknowledged that Council meetings will be webcast in the New Year and it is hoped that this will increase public interest in Council proceedings.

Members highlighted the benefit of engaging with Community and Town Councils on scrutiny FWP's and Officers agreed that they would be considered as key stakeholders.

It was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved. By show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

5. Scrutiny Improvement Action Plan - Training

Officers gave an overview of the training recently provided in accordance with the Scrutiny Improvement Action Plan.

Clarification was sought on the purpose of pre-meetings for scrutiny committees. Officers stated that a pre-meeting is the opportunity for the entire scrutiny committee to meet in private ahead of the meeting to plan the priority of reports, decide how long to devote to each item and arrange questioning themes. The pre-meeting can meet half an hour to an hour before the start of the scrutiny committee meeting and will be supported by a scrutiny officer.

Members discussed the attendance and uptake of training and expressed disappointment that so many Members gave apologies or did not respond. A request was made for a list of training and seminars to be produced and distributed to members on a monthly basis.

It was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved and Members recommended that additional training be provided. By show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

The meeting closed at 18:07 p.m.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 30th January 2014 they were signed by the Chairman.

CHAIRMAN