



SCRUTINY LEADERSHIP GROUP – 29TH MAY 2014

SUBJECT: GWENT SCRUTINY CHALLENGE

REPORT BY: SCRUTINY RESEARCH OFFICER

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Scrutiny Leadership Group of the background and purpose of the Gwent Scrutiny Challenge event to be held on 6th June 2014.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 This report outlines the arrangements in respect of the 'Gwent Scrutiny Challenge' event, which will build on the success of the national "Scrutiny in the Spotlight" conference in November 2013. The event will include contributions from the Centre for Public Scrutiny, WAO, CSSIW, Estyn and WLGA.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The operation of scrutiny is required by the Local Government Act 2000 and subsequent Assembly legislation.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 In order to build on the success of the "Scrutiny in the Spotlight" conference in November 2013, the five "Gwent" authorities are planning a collaborative training programme to share some of the key messages about effective scrutiny with a wider audience.
- 4.2 The "Gwent Scrutiny Challenge" will start with a high profile event to kick-start the debate. This will be followed up with a package of training tailored to each of the five participating authorities, taking forward the lessons learned from the event and developing a culture of confident challenge across Gwent. The "Challenge" in the title refers to the whole programme, both the event and the follow up actions to encourage better scrutiny within each authority.
- 4.3 The target audience will include:
- All Members and Co-opted Members of the "Gwent" authorities
 - Statutory officers and Scrutiny / Improvement / Audit officers from each Council
 - Representatives of Newport Fairness Commission
 - Representatives from ABHB Non-Executive Members / Aneurin Bevan CHC, Gwent Police and Crime Panel (Co-opted Members), South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority, Local Service Board, Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations
 - Scrutiny Champions and Lead Officers from elsewhere in Wales

4.4 The key partners and contributors at the event will be:

- Wales Audit Office
- Centre for Public Scrutiny
- Estyn
- CSSIW
- WLGA

4.5 The purpose of the event is to:

- Promote understanding of the importance of scrutiny in delivering effective challenge and supporting accountability.
- Further develop members' skills in robust scrutiny questioning.
- Promote a shared understanding amongst scrutiny members that 'challenge is my responsibility'.
- Develop a culture of confident challenge within our organisations, including within service management.

4.6 The event involves significant engagement with audit, inspection and regulatory bodies and has been developed in partnership with the Wales Audit Office, and will also include CSSIW and Estyn.

4.7 This is a product of the Gwent Scrutiny Network, which was set up as a result of the WAO Scrutiny Study peer review work to help share best practice and collaborate on common areas such as training. It focuses on the transfer of good scrutiny practice, through the following:

- Potential to be a significant part of the legacy from the "Scrutiny in the Spotlight" conference in November, taking the key note speech by Peter Watkin Jones and building a training programme around the outcomes of the presentation.
- Gwent network intend to develop a "legacy", by following the main event with a package of training to put Members' knowledge and skills into practice.
- High profile speakers have been invited to attend the event, hoping to maximise both the draw for Members and the impact of the messages being delivered.
- Although the geographical limit of this project is Gwent, if it is successful the lessons learned from this project will have national application as a training and development model. This will be a consideration of the evaluation process following the event.
- The event will be filmed in order to refer back to the messages shared as part of our training activities. A film resource will also enable the learning to be shared more widely i.e. by other Scrutiny Teams across Wales / other public bodies.

4.8 The aims and expected benefits of the project are to:

- Use the lessons learned from experiences such as Mid Staffordshire to evaluate the culture of challenge in our own organisations
- Understand that effective challenge can prevent mistakes or minimise their impact.
- Promote confident challenge amongst Members
- Develop better questioning skills and strategies
- Develop closer working relationships with regulators
- Promote local debate about Members' role in challenge, scrutiny, audit and inspection – not just amongst Members but also with officers and partners. The involvement of senior management team members throughout Gwent will be critical to this.

4.9 The event has been funded through the Scrutiny Development Fund provided by Welsh Government. A copy of the successful bid is attached at appendix 1 for information.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This report is for information purposes, so the Council's EqIA process does not need to be applied.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no financial implications not contained in the report.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no personnel implications not contained in the report.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 There are no consultation responses not contained in the report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 That Scrutiny Leadership Group note and comment on the arrangements, purpose and potential outcomes of the scrutiny challenge event.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To keep Scrutiny Leadership Group informed of scrutiny developments.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000

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Appendices:
Appendix 1 Welsh Government Scrutiny Development Fund Bid