



## COUNCIL – 6TH OCTOBER 2015

**SUBJECT: SCRUTINY REVIEW 2015**

**REPORT BY: ACTING DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES AND SECTION 151 OFFICER**

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- 1.1 The attached report outlined the findings and recommendations identified from the view of scrutiny arrangements. The review was carried out to identify improvement to the operation of scrutiny following recommendations from the Wales Audit Office report 'Follow-up of the Special Inspection and Reports in the Public Interest', dated January 2015. The Scrutiny Review report was considered by Democratic Services Committee on 16th September 2015.
- 1.2 The report identifies the issues for improvement both contained the WAO report and identified by workshop groups attended by Members and Officers. The outcome of the workshops highlighted issues in relation to agendas, forward work programmes and witnesses, information and reports, task and finish groups, scrutiny support, the role of Cabinet and scrutiny members at committee, meeting organisation and chairing skills, and finally the external scrutiny role of local authorities.
- 1.3 Members were advised that the Project Group has developed its recommendations based on the issues raised by both Members and Officers and considers that these recommendations will address the issues raised by Wales Audit Office. Following discussion on the content of the report, it was moved and seconded that subject to an amendment to recommendation (iv), to allow Scrutiny Chairs to accept urgent items to be added to scrutiny committee agenda, the recommendations in the report be approved. By show of hands this was unanimously agreed. The Democratic Services Committee recommended to Council that for the reasons contained in the report:-
- (i) A limit of no more than 4 items be placed on scrutiny committee agendas.
  - (ii) There be a limit placed on the number of special scrutiny meetings held per scrutiny committee, of two additional meetings per annum, with priority for MTFP.
  - (iii) Cabinet and scrutiny committee forward work programmes include a brief narrative on key issues to be covered in the reports.
  - (iv) Scrutiny committees discuss their forward work programmes at each meeting and confirm the 4 items to be discussed at the following meeting. The Chair of the relevant committee will decide whether any additional items are to be added to the agenda if presented urgently before the next meeting, subject to the limit of 4 items per agenda and acknowledging a special meeting can be arranged if necessary.
  - (v) Scrutiny Leadership Group recommend whether referrals of individual Ombudsman reports from Standards Committee should be referred to scrutiny committee (and if so which committee) or Audit Committee.

- (vi) The positions of non - statutory co-opted members (without voting rights) of Health Social Care and Wellbeing and Education for Life Scrutiny Committees be removed and a list of stakeholders and external witnesses be developed for each scrutiny committee (maintained and agreed by Scrutiny Leadership Group). These can be called upon for specific agenda items to give evidence.
- (vii) An expert witness protocol be developed to ensure that witnesses are fully briefed and, in accordance with good practice, to ensure that evidence provided to the scrutiny committee is balanced and fair.
- (viii) Information items be removed from scrutiny committee agendas and instead be placed on the Members Portal in consultation with Democratic Services Committee.
- (ix) A prioritisation matrix be developed for requests for reports from Members and the public.
- (x) Comments from the workshops about report content be fed back to the relevant Directors. The quality of reports will be reviewed and monitored by Scrutiny Leadership Group for 6 months from the implementation of the new arrangements.
- (xi) A protocol be developed for task and finish groups and agreed by Democratic Services Committee, with a limit of two task and finish groups to run at a time, to ensure that the burden on limited resources is managed appropriately.
- (xii) The members training programme be further developed to incorporate relevant comments from the workshops including developing cabinet members role and be monitored by the Democratic Services Committee and Cabinet Member with responsibility for HR, Governance and Business.
- (xiii) That guidance on the format and content of the Cabinet Members written statement be developed. A new protocol will be developed to provide that the statement is shared ahead of the relevant meeting with scrutiny committee members and placed on the Members Portal, in advance of the scrutiny meeting. The protocol will give advice on the type of information to be included in the statement.
- (xiv) Good practice for pre-meetings be shared amongst Scrutiny Leadership Group including peer observations.
- (xv) The possibility of joint scrutiny committees be explored and the minutes of joint committees and other information about relevant outside bodies be published on the Members Portal.
- (xvi) A dedicated performance management meeting be held for each scrutiny committee once per annum.
- (xvii) The protocol for External Audit, Inspection and Regulatory Bodies interface with scrutiny be presented to Council for consideration and adoption once it is completed.
- (xxiii) The terms of reference and membership of the Scrutiny Leadership Group be reviewed to take into account any changes required as a result of the scrutiny review.
- (xix) A self-evaluation of scrutiny arrangements be carried out within 12 months of changes being agreed.
- (xx) The Monitoring Officer be authorised to amend the constitution in line with the above recommendations.

1.4 Members are asked to consider the recommendations.

Author: C. Forbes-Thompson, Scrutiny Research Officer, Ext 4279

Appendices:  
Appendix 1 Report to Democratic Services Committee on 16th September 2015 – Agenda item