



SCRUTINY LEADERSHIP GROUP

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH
ON THURSDAY 27TH OCTOBER 2016 AT 5.00 P.M.**

PRESENT:

Councillor S. Morgan – Chair
Councillor G. Kirby – Vice Chair

Councillors:

L. Ackerman, Mrs E.M. Aldworth, D.T. Davies, C. Mann, and D. Rees

Together with:

C. Forbes-Thompson (Interim Head of Democratic Services) and E. Sullivan (Democratic Services Officer)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs P. Cook W. David and J. Pritchard.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES – 28TH JULY 2016

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Scrutiny Leadership Group meeting held on 28th July 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

4. SCRUTINY REVIEW: TASK AND FINISH GROUP PROTOCOL AND GUIDANCE

The Interim Head of Democratic Services introduced the report which presented a draft task and finish group protocol and guidance for the Committee's consideration.

Members were referred to Appendix 1 of the report and the Officer outlined the protocol and guidance contained therein.

The Chair thanked the Officer for her report and Members comments were welcomed.

A Member referred to Section 4 of the protocol and referenced it against the checklist contained on page 15. Section 4 referred to Cabinet and/or full Council consideration and yet the checklist referenced only Cabinet. Mrs Forbes-Thompson agreed to add full Council to the documents checklist.

Members agreed that a review date should be added to the protocol in order to ensure that the document remains relevant going forward.

RESOLVED that subject to the addition of Council to the document checklist and the inclusion of a review date the Task and Finish Group Protocol and Guidance be approved and added to the Members Portal.

5. SCRUTINY REVIEW: EXPERT WITNESS PROTOCOL AND GUIDANCE

The Interim Head of Democratic Services introduced the report which presented the draft expert witness protocol and guidance for the Committee's consideration.

Members were referred to Appendix 1 of the report and the Officer outlined the protocol and its provisions. The importance of ensuring a balanced approach when deciding on witnesses was emphasised in order to equally present the various perspectives, reference was made to the forward work programme process and marrying how reports contained therein could benefit from expert witness contributions.

The Chair thanked the Officer for her report and Members comments were welcomed.

Members discussed the need to think ahead in terms of inviting witnesses and welcomed the different view points they could provide to the discussion. Clarification was sought in relation to public consultation and the Officer reminded Members that the public can get involved via the website and can comment or request to speak on any report coming forward should they be minded to do so. The work programmes now include a narrative which allows those not familiar with council processes to easily understand the topic coming forward and make representations. The Committee were also mindful that the number of witnesses in any meeting would need to be carefully managed so that the process did not become unmanageable.

Members agreed that a review date should be added to the protocol in order to ensure that the document remains relevant going forward.

RESOLVED that subject to the addition of a review date to the document the Scrutiny Committee Expert Witness Protocol be approved and added to the Members Portal.

6. SCRUTINY REVIEW: SCRUTINY SELF EVALUATION AND PEER REVIEW

The Interim Head of Democratic Services introduced the report which outlined proposals to conduct a self-evaluation and peer review to determine the impact of the changes implemented as a result of the scrutiny review.

The procedures for the proposed review were outlined and the need to look at good practice, outcomes and characteristics of good scrutiny across Wales as a benchmark measurement was emphasised. This would ensure the robustness of the self-evaluation and more accurately gauge the effectiveness of the changes to the scrutiny process. Members were advised that these characteristics had been developed by the Welsh Scrutiny Practitioners Network and endorsed by Wales Audit Office.

The Officer confirmed that a questionnaire would be sent to all Councillors as attached in Appendix 1 of the report and Members would be asked to comment on 3 different sections relating to the scrutiny environment, scrutiny practice and the impact of scrutiny. Further to the questionnaire a peer review group will be set up to observe scrutiny practice and provide feedback. The peer group will be drawn from Members from Newport and Monmouth authorities the WLGA and possibly Wales Audit Office subject to their availability and the Committee's approval.

The Chair thanked the Officer for her report and full discussion ensued.

Members agreed that it would be useful to have a representative from WAO on the review group and suggested that a representative from Grant Thornton might also be useful. Mrs Forbes-Thompson advised that Grant Thornton would probably have to be paid to attend, but would make enquiries in this regard. Members agreed that if payment for attendance was required then no invitation should be issued.

The Committee suggested that the similar questionnaire be issued to newly elected Members in order to establish a base line for future analysis.

Having full considered the report and its content it was moved and seconded that the proposals for self-evaluation and peer review be approved.

RESOLVED that the proposals for self-evaluation and peer review be approved.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Councillor T. D. Davies queried the need for a pre-meeting for the forthcoming Special Scrutiny Committee meetings on the Budget and asked the Leadership Group's opinion on the matter. The Member suggested that they be dispensed with for Special Meetings to allow the order of business to start promptly at 5.00pm allowing more formal discussion time.

This was discussed and it was agreed that Mrs Forbes-Thompson would check guidance in relation to special meetings and then contact all the Scrutiny Committee Chairs as to the majority view and provide feedback on the outcome.

The meeting closed at 17.22 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 26th January 2017 they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR