



## **SCRUTINY LEADERSHIP GROUP – 26TH JANUARY 2017**

**SUBJECT: SCRUTINY REVIEW: SCRUTINY SELF EVALUATION AND PEER REVIEW**

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

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### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 For Scrutiny Leadership Group to be informed of the outcome of the self-evaluation and arrangements for the planned peer review.

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 This report sets out the outcome of the scrutiny self-evaluation and arrangements for a peer review as discussed by Scrutiny Leadership Group Council on 27th October 2016. Scrutiny Leadership Group is asked to comment on the outcome.

### **3. LINKS TO STRATEGY**

- 3.1 The operation of scrutiny is required by the Local Government Act 2000 and subsequent Assembly legislation.
- 3.2 The self-evaluation proposals contribute to the following Well-being Goals within the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2016 by ensuring that scrutiny function evaluates its effectiveness and identifies areas for improvement. An effective scrutiny function can ensure that council policies are scrutinised against the following goals:
- A prosperous Wales
  - A resilient Wales
  - A healthier Wales
  - A more equal Wales
  - A Wales of cohesive communities
  - A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
  - A globally responsible Wales

### **4. THE REPORT**

#### **SELF-EVALUATION**

- 4.1 The Scrutiny Review agreed by full Council on the 5th October 2015 included a recommendation to carry out a self-evaluation 12 months after the changes had been agreed.

- 4.2 Scrutiny Leadership Group considered the methodology for a self-evaluation of the scrutiny function and agreed to measure the effectiveness of scrutiny against an established set of characteristics for good scrutiny. These Outcomes and Characteristics of Effective Scrutiny in Local Government had previously been endorsed by full Council in October 2013, as its strategic vision for a scrutiny function. Therefore these characteristics were used as a basis for the questionnaire.
- 4.3 The questionnaire was issued to all 73 Members and senior officers. The response rate was 37.5 with a total of 65 responses received. The following table gives a breakdown of responses received:

Respondent	Responses	Percentage of overall responses
Scrutiny Member	23	35%
Cabinet Member	2	3%
Non-scrutiny member	3	5%
Officer	36	55%
Not indicated	1	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100%</b>

- 4.4 The questionnaire is made up of three sections, Scrutiny Environment; Scrutiny Practice and Impact of Scrutiny. Each section set out a series of statements and asked respondents to indicate if they 'Strongly Disagreed' 'Disagreed' 'Agreed' 'Strongly Agreed' or 'Don't Know', however not all respondents answered every question. There was also the opportunity to give comments at the end of each section.
- 4.5 The following table shows the statements in the Scrutiny Environment section of the questionnaire and the analysis of responses received from Members.

#### Scrutiny Environment

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Scrutiny has a clearly defined role in the council's improvement arrangements	3.5%	11%	39%	43%	3.5%
Scrutiny has a valued role in the council's improvement arrangements	3.5%	11%	32%	50%	3.5%
Scrutiny have the dedicated officer support it needs from officers	4%	14%	43%	39%	0%
Scrutiny members have the training and development opportunities they need to undertake their role effectively	3.5%	7%	61%	28.5%	0%
Scrutiny is recognised by the Executive and Corporate Management team as an important council mechanism for community engagement	4%	14%	39%	32%	7%

- 4.6 The questionnaire also allowed respondents to give comments at the end of each section, listed below are the two comments from Members:
- 'I feel we need another scrutiny officer so we can do more task and finish'
  - Councillors are not elected to be scrutineers or part of a mechanism for 'community engagement'. They are elected to be decision makers at Council and its Committees. In my view the Cabinet and CMT system does not work for the Council, its employees or the public.

4.7 The responses in respect of Scrutiny Environment show that the average result 15% of Members disagreed with the statements, whereas 82% agreed with the statements, with an average of 3% stating don't know.

4.8 The following table shows the statements in the Scrutiny Practice section of the questionnaire and the analysis of responses received from Members.

### Scrutiny Practice

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Scrutiny inquiries (Task & Finish Group) are non-political	7%	14%	50%	21%	7%
Scrutiny inquiries (Task & Finish Group) are methodologically sound	4%	11%	57%	21%	7%
Scrutiny inquiries (Task & Finish Group) incorporate a wide range of evidence and perspectives	3.5%	11%	43%	32%	7%
Scrutiny is member-led and has `ownership` of its work programme	3.5%	11%	43%	39%	3.5%
Scrutiny takes into account the views of the public, partners and regulators, whilst balancing between prioritising community concerns against issues of strategic risk and importance	0%	21%	29%	39%	11%
Stakeholders have the ability to contribute to the development and delivery of scrutiny forward work programmes	0%	7%	50%	29%	14%
Overview and scrutiny meetings and activities are well-planned	0%	11%	50%	36%	3%
Overview and scrutiny meetings and activities are chaired effectively	11%	11%	54%	21%	3%
Overview and scrutiny meetings and activities make best use of the resources available to it	0%	7%	64%	25%	4%
Scrutiny is characterised by effective communication to raise awareness of, and encourage participation in democratic accountability	0%	14%	50%	25%	7%
Scrutiny operates non-politically	11%	36%	25%	21%	7%
Scrutiny deals effectively with sensitive political issues, tension and conflict	7%	11%	54%	25%	3%
Scrutiny builds trust and good relationships with a wide variety of internal stakeholders	0%	18%	46%	29%	7%
Scrutiny builds trust and good relationships with a wide variety of external stakeholders	0%	25%	43%	25%	7%

4.9 Members gave the following comments at the end of this section, as follows:

- It still seems hard to get general public to engage in the scrutiny process.
- With apparently over 500 services and 9600 staff, with an overall budget of £600million, Councillors are in the dark as the work undertaken in the 'back offices' of the council, Cabinet Members seem not to be in charge of their portfolios. Scrutiny should meet in the daytime,

take longer if necessary, should involve much more of the public and less reports and, more practical visits to see for themselves the work that is done.

4.10 The responses in respect of Scrutiny Practice show that on average 18% of Members disagreed with the statements, whereas 75% agreed with the statements, with an average of 7% stating don't know.

4.11 The following table shows the statements in the Impact of Scrutiny section of the questionnaire and the analysis of responses received from Members.

### Impact of Scrutiny

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Scrutiny regularly engages in evidence based challenge of decision makers	3.5%	14%	50%	25%	3.5%
Scrutiny regularly engages in evidence based challenge of service providers	0%	18%	46%	25%	7%
Scrutiny provides viable and well evidenced solutions to recognised problems	3.5%	18%	39%	29%	7%
Non-executive members provide an evidence based check and balance to Executive decision making	7%	14%	50%	21%	4%
Decision makers give public account for themselves at scrutiny committees for their portfolio responsibilities	11%	18%	36%	28%	3.5%
Overview and scrutiny enables the 'voice' of local people and communities across the area to be heard as part of decision and policy-making processes	7%	18%	50%	18%	3.5%

4.12 Members gave the following comments at the end of this section, as follows:

- 'Really difficult to get people involved'
- 'One cannot blame the staff it is the system that is at fault'
- 'Because we have pre-decision scrutiny it does not always affect cabinet decisions but cabinet always takes the views of scrutiny on board.'

4.13 The responses in respect of Impact of Scrutiny show that on average 23% of Members disagreed with the statements, whereas 72% agreed with the statements, with an average of 5% stating don't know.

4.14 In some instances there were some incomplete responses to the questions, therefore not all sections add up to 100%.

### PEER REVIEW

4.15 Arrangements for a peer review are in hand with agreement reached with Members at Newport City Council and Monmouthshire County Council to take part in reciprocal peer evaluations. The WLGA have agreed to assist each group to carry out the observations and WAO will provide a briefing for peer group members but not take part in the observations. It was hoped to carry out the first observations during November/December 2016, however there was insufficient time to co-ordinate dates. Therefore it is planned to commence in February 2017.

## **5. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS**

- 5.1 This report contributes to the well-being goals as set out in links to strategy above. It is consistent with the five ways of working as defined within the sustainable development principle in that by carrying out a self-evaluation and taking part in a peer observation the scrutiny function will be better able to identify areas for improvement. This should ensure that the scrutiny function is more effective when reviewing services and policies and ensure it considers the wellbeing goals.

## **6. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 This scrutiny self-evaluation included questions on involving a wide range of evidence and perspectives, building trust and good relationships with a wide variety of internal and external stakeholders. This sits alongside protocol and guidance on expert witnesses and task and finish group guidance. The aim was to evaluate the scrutiny function and any further areas for improvement.

## **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

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

## **8. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

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

## **9. CONSULTATIONS**

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

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 10.1 Scrutiny Leadership to consider and comment on the outcome of the self-evaluation.

## **11. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 11.1 To ensure that the changes as a result of the scrutiny review are evaluated.

## **12. STATUTORY POWER**

- 12.1 Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000.  
12.2 Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.

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Background:

Scrutiny Review Council 5th October 2015  
Scrutiny Improvement Action Plan Council 8th October 2013  
Good Scrutiny? Good Question! - Auditor General for Wales Improvement Study:  
Scrutiny in Local Government – 29th May 2014