



SCRUTINY LEADERSHIP GROUP – 29TH OCTOBER 2014

SUBJECT: SCRUTINY IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN - UPDATE

REPORT BY: SCRUTINY RESEARCH OFFICER

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update Scrutiny Leadership Group on the progress to date on the actions contained in the scrutiny improvement action plan.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 This report gives an update on the scrutiny improvement action plan, and highlights where actions are completed.

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 The Scrutiny Improvement Action Plan was presented and endorsed by Council on the 8th October 2013. Since then progress has been made against a number of the actions, which are outlined in the updated action plan attached at appendix 1.

Training and Development for Members and Officers

- 4.2 Significant work has been undertaken on training for Members, actions 1 – 3 are completed in full and most of the tasks against actions 4 & 5 are completed. There are outstanding tasks against actions 4 & 5 regarding the peer review. Since the SIAP was agreed the council agreed to work with the four other Gwent local authorities and the Centre for Public Scrutiny and arranged the Gwent Scrutiny Challenge event, which was held in June 2014.
- 4.3 A report came to SLG in September 2014 to discuss the legacy of this challenge event and Members agreed to take part in peer observations across the Gwent area. Since then a meeting was held with the Centre for Public Scrutiny and representatives of all the Gwent local authorities to discuss the arrangements for a peer review, where it was suggested it would be helpful to arrange training for all Members taking part. The training will outline the arrangements, help Members identify good practice using the 'Characteristics of Good Scrutiny' and also agree which meetings will be observed. The aim is arrange this as soon as possible and start the peer reviews before the end of the year.

Scrutiny Development and Organisation

- 4.4 Actions 6 – 11, 13 & 15 are completed. The final task against action 8 was to arrange scrutiny training for Cabinet Members. This took place in September 2014 with two sessions for both Cabinet Members and the Management Network on the same day. The outcome of the training was that Cabinet Members and Managers what they can do, understood the value that scrutiny can bring and areas for improvement:
- How Cabinet Members can refer their contacts as expert witnesses for scrutiny.
 - There should be more external engagement in scrutiny.
 - Consider use of technology for scrutiny witnesses.
 - Consultation with appropriate stakeholders.
 - Consider the impact and tracking of scrutiny work.
 - Focus on narrow and deep scrutiny work.
 - Tangible outcomes – what difference does scrutiny make?
 - The Chairs are essential to the effectiveness of scrutiny.
 - A strategic approach to scrutiny is needed going forward.
- 4.5 Action 16 is on hold until Welsh Government provides guidance on Designated Persons, which is anticipated next year. Action 12, updating the scrutiny booklet, a revised booklet is completed and is available on the council website, a copy is attached at appendix 2. Further amendments will be made to the booklet once the prioritisation matrix for reports suggested by SLG is finalised.
- 4.6 Action 14 on public engagement with the public and stakeholders, the scrutiny committee co-option arrangements is still under consideration and a report is being prepared for consideration at a future SLG meeting. Finally for action 17, a revised protocol on Councillor Call for Action (CCfA) has been amalgamated with the Crime and Disorder CCfA. This report is being consulted on prior to being reported to SLG.

Performance Management

- 4.7 Action 18, refers to WAO service performance report being reported to scrutiny, this is referred to in the Welsh Government White Paper 'Devolution, Democracy and Delivery', with auditors and regulators now directed to report directly to scrutiny committees. Guidance is being sought from Welsh Government so new arrangements will reflect this recent change to government policy.
- 4.8 Action 19, refers to member training which has been completed and the booklet is available. Action 20 is partly completed with the training on service improvement plans and Ffynnon to be provided in October/November 2014. Finally in respect of action 21 a report has been drafted and will be reported shortly.

Forward Work Programmes

- 4.9 This refers to action 22 and development of scrutiny committee forward work programmes and is fully completed.

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 Scrutiny Leadership note and comment on the progress made in respect of the action plan.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 For Scrutiny Leadership Group to monitor the scrutiny improvement action plan.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000.

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Appendices:
Appendix 1 Scrutiny Improvement Action Plan Update
Appendix 2 An Introduction to Scrutiny