

Minutes



Performance Scrutiny Committee - People

Date: 12 September 2017

Time: 10.00 am

Present: Councillors D Williams (Chair), T Holyoake, L Lacey, H Thomas, K Thomas, C Townsend and T Watkins

In Attendance: E Blayney (Senior Overview and Scrutiny Officer), M Lawrence (Overview and Scrutiny Officer), N Barnett (Democratic Services Support Officer)

Apologies: Councillors J Guy, J Watkins and K Whitehead

1 Declarations of Interest

None.

2 Draft Forward Work Programme

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer presented the Draft Annual Forward Work Programme to the Committee for consideration. Members were advised that the work programme reflects the new Terms of Reference for this Committee and the new Scrutiny Committee structure that was agreed by the Council at its Annual General Meeting in May 2017. The Officer outlined the shift of focus within this restructure to emphasise the Performance role of Scrutiny, thereby addressing the criticisms raised in the Corporate Assessment by Wales Audit Office and other regulatory bodies that Scrutiny did not routinely and effectively hold the Executive to Account for its performance. It was also advised that the work programme has also been also aligned to compliment the Cabinet work programme.

As part of this change to the Committees, Members were advised that the Scrutiny would now be receiving the performance reports prior to the Cabinet, to allow for Scrutiny comments to be submitted to the Cabinet prior to a decision being taken. The Cabinet Members would be invited to each meeting, along with the Heads of Service to discuss the reports with the Committee.

The Committee would receive a forward work programme report at each meeting to confirm the following two meetings, and to adjust the work programme where necessary.

The following questions and comments were made:

- Members voiced concerns by focusing on only performance that the other roles of Scrutiny not be fulfilled. Members were advised that the Committee Structure had been approved by the Council in May 2017, where this shift in focus had been discussed and that the other roles of Scrutiny (Policy Review, Policy Development, Partnership, and management of the Scrutiny Process) were within the remit of the other 3 Scrutiny Committees.

- Concerns were raised that the effectiveness of Scrutiny would be hindered by the lack of budget to make improvements to services. The Senior Overview and Scrutiny Officer highlighted that although Scrutiny was not a decision maker, its role was wider than budget, and this Committee's function was to hold the Executive to account for its performance within the budget already set by the Council, and consider whether the Service Area was making best use of the resources it has. It was also explained that under the separation of functions between the Cabinet and Scrutiny, that Scrutiny was a legal, statutory requirement and that its role and function was different to that of Cabinet.
- Query was made about a proposal for Newport City Homes to remove a Council representative from their board, with the report being presented to Cabinet on 13 September 2017. Members asked that the Committee write to the Cabinet and ask for this report to be deferred pending Scrutiny consideration. Members were advised by the Overview and Scrutiny Officer that further information would be required to be able to assess whether this was a suitable topic for Scrutiny, and that the governance arrangement of a partner organisation would not be a matter for this Committee, falling within the terms of reference of the Performance Scrutiny Committee – Partnerships.

Councillor Trevor Watkins declared his interest on this matter as a Member of the Newport Homes Scrutiny Board.

- Members discussed the importance of ensuring public interest in the content of the work programme, and ensuring that items on the work programme met the criteria for good scrutiny outlined on page 7 of the agenda. This included items that were of public interest; issues whereby the Committee could realistically effect change, that relate to an area not performing well, were relevant to large parts of the city and where work was being not replicated elsewhere.
- Members were advised of the upcoming Scrutiny Questioning Skills training sessions being held on Monday 9 October at 10am and Wednesday 25 October at 2pm. The Committee were asked to confirm which session they were attending so that numbers attending could be confirmed.

The Committee discussed Appendix 2, the draft schedule of meetings, in particular the start times of the meeting. It was queried if there could be a trial of alternating times for the meetings, with the next meeting starting at 4pm and the meeting after at 10am. Committee agreed to trial the alternate start times to allow working members to attend, and to monitor the attendance rates for the two time slots.

Resolutions and outcomes:

- i. The Committee **approved** the Annual Forward Work Programme, subject to the clarification provided that the programme would be regularly reviewed and developed as needed.
- ii. The Committee **approved** the schedule of meetings and **agreed** to alternate the start time of the meeting.

- iii. The Committee agreed to write the Cabinet to ask that the [Cabinet Report on Newport City Homes – Proposed Governance Arrangements](#) be deferred, and that the Cabinet refer the report to the appropriate Scrutiny Committee for consideration prior to making a decision.

The meeting terminated at 10:49