



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

SCRUTINY CHAIRS & VICE CHAIRS MEETING- 1ST October 2019

OUTLINE OF THE CURRENT SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & COMMUNICATIONS

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs with information outlining the following (proposed) additions to the Scrutiny arrangements:-

- Information Reports
- Pre Scrutiny Meetings
- Consultation links

2.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Scrutiny Chairs & Vice Chairs:

- 2.1 Consider and comment on the suggested proposals as detailed within the report and outlined in section 3 of the report;
- 2.2 Endorse the proposals to a future meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee for its consideration and subsequent implementation of the pre-meetings for an agreed Scrutiny Committee in October 2019.

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 Members will be aware that the Council's Scrutiny arrangements have been subject to a number of significant changes which are strengthening the Council's overall governance arrangements. Changes include:

- Increasing use of pre scrutiny,
- More focused work that leads to tangible outcomes for the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf through Scrutiny Working Groups
- Changes to the management arrangements
- Strengthening resourcing of the Scrutiny function.

3.2 Following the review of the Council's scrutiny arrangements undertaken by the Service Director Democratic Services & Communications, additional areas were highlighted as requiring further consideration. This evidences the need for Scrutiny in RCT to continue to be evaluated and for changes and improvements to be made.

3.3 Information Reports

3.4 Members agreed that there was an over reliance on standard information reports which were hindering their ability to undertake meaningful Scrutiny.

3.5 In view of this it is proposed that reports whose purpose is to provide information only are referenced at the end of the agenda and accessed via a link. It will be for Members to acknowledge the information contained within the report(s) and for any queries to be directed to the Scrutiny support team by email (via the Council's Scrutiny inbox).

3.6 This will, not only reduce the number of agenda items going forward for consideration to each committee but also increase the opportunity for Members to undertake effective challenge and produce significant outcomes. The reports for information will provide Members with up-to-date information relating to their scrutiny committee and keep them abreast of any relevant developments.

3.7 Meeting Preparation – Pre-Meetings

3.8 A number of benefits can be derived from holding pre-meetings for all committee members to prepare for the scrutiny committee ahead. Meeting preparation is crucial for a successful and productive outcome and provides opportunity for a particular questioning strategy to be undertaken:-

- What is the outcome you are looking to achieve?
- What questions do you need to ask to get this information?
- How will Committee approach the issue?

3.9 It is proposed that the one scrutiny committee pilots the pre-meetings from October 2019 with a view to introducing pre-meetings to all of the Scrutiny Committees thereon. The proposals for best practice are set out below:-

- That pre-meetings are held immediately before the committee meeting;
- That pre-meetings should not be open to the public;
- Pre-meetings should include Democratic Services Officer support.
- That pre-meetings should be used to guide lines of enquiry and not provide Members with prepared questions;
- Pre-meetings should be used to assist Committee in achieving outcomes; and
- That the operation of pre-meetings is monitored throughout the year.

3.10 Consultation Links

3.11 Members will receive links on a monthly basis to open consultations run by Welsh Government. This will inform Members of the latest consultations being undertaken and present them with the opportunity to respond as individuals or request that their respective scrutiny committee consider a united response within the specified time frame. Should Members wish to have further discussion around the consultation results, this can be picked up and progressed by the Scrutiny Graduate Officer.

4. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no Equality and Diversity implications arising from this report and no Equality Impact Assessment is deemed necessary for the purposes of this report.

5. CONSULTATION

5.1 The considerations and comments of Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs have been sought in respect of the items contained within the report and will be reported at a future Overview & Scrutiny meeting.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no financial implications as a result of the recommendations set out in the report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

7.1 There are no legal implications as a result of the recommendations set out in the report.

8. LINKS TO CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

8.1 The proposals to address the WAO report proposals includes arrangements to strengthen the Council's consideration and scrutiny of its work, through 'the lens of the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act'. These arrangements will be embedded into the business of the Council as set out in the Policy Statement agreed by Cabinet on [2 November 2016](#).

8.2 The proposals outlined within the report will work to ensure a sustainable and robust scrutiny structure is in place which will effectively challenge policy decisions taken forward.

9. CONCLUSION

9.1 The Council is continuing its work to strengthen its scrutiny arrangements and these further enhancements support the council in responding to the findings

arising from the recent WAO report and will further strengthen governance and accountability arrangements.