

Review of Bridgend CBC Overview and Scrutiny Arrangements

Initial Review Paper

An initial meeting between Scrutiny Committee Chairs, the Chief Executive and Officers has been held to discuss the Wales Audit Office Report on Overview and Scrutiny in Bridgend CBC. The proposals in the report were considered and the following potential future review activity was identified.

Proposal 1: The Council should explore more innovative methods for undertaking scrutiny activity to make the most effective use of resources available and to improve the impact of scrutiny activity.

Conduct research work to identify scrutiny best practice and innovation. This will involve liaising with identified groups such as the WLGA, Wales Scrutiny Network, Centre for Public Scrutiny and the Association of Democratic Services Officers.

Develop proposals to identify alternative methods of undertaking scrutiny reviews. This will involve developing proposals for Members to undertake fact finding/site visits on selected subject areas rather than reviewing matters via formal Committee. The aim is to provide Members with direct, first-hand experience of a subject area which will aid and develop Member review and decision making skills. Members will be asked to identify suitable subject areas in conjunction with advice from officers. Scrutiny officers will prepare a brief consolidated report after fact finding/site visits to highlight findings and proposed recommendations for consideration at the relevant Scrutiny Committee.

Develop proposals to highlight/promote the positive benefits and added value of scrutiny in the Council's decision making process.

Proposal 2: The Council should improve the timeliness with which scrutiny committees are provided with information they request to enable them to undertake their work more effectively.

Review arrangements for how specific information requests listed on the scrutiny Forward Work Programme are recorded and taken forward by council officers.

Review how scrutiny tracks/monitors progress of recommendations that have been agreed for implementation.

Monitor progress of recently introduced Cabinet and Scrutiny Chairs meeting.

Proposal 3: The Council should consider the skills and training that scrutiny members may need to better prepare them for current and future challenges, and develop and deliver an appropriate training and development programme.

Conduct a survey of all scrutiny Members to assess their overview and scrutiny training and development needs. After completion of the survey it is suggested that a consolidated report be prepared detailing proposals on how training will be prioritised and delivered.

Consider whether refresher scrutiny training should be provided for Members.

Proposal 4: The Council should consider how it can involve the public and other stakeholders in its scrutiny activity.

Explore scope for scrutiny Members to attend meetings of partners as part of its work rather than invite partners to scrutiny Committee meetings – for example Bridgend Public Service Board.

Explore the scope to suspend provisions of the Constitution at Scrutiny Committees when required to support effective engagement with the public.

Develop the use of social media to promote and enhance public engagement with scrutiny.

Review the overview and scrutiny web page on the Council website to ensure that all information is relevant and up to date.

Review the location meetings that are webcast on the Council's website to ensure that they are given sufficient prominence and are accessible.

Develop a programme of scrutiny meetings that are to be webcast.

Explore how the use of technology can support remote access and participation at scrutiny meetings (formal Committee and informal meetings).

Proposal 5: The Council should review the type of scrutiny support required to enable the scrutiny function to respond to current and future challenges.

Explore how greater use of technology can support the scrutiny function generally.

Implement arrangements for private pre-meetings. The aim is to provide the Chair and Members with the opportunity to develop lines of enquiry in private prior to conducting business and taking evidence from invited attendees at formal public Committee.

Explore the scope and related implications for the Council's Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be chaired by a Member other than the Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny Subject Committees.

Explore the scope for re-introducing scrutiny research and evaluation panels on specific subject areas.