

## **SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD**

### **Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Management Board held on Friday, 10 July 2015 at 10.30am in Meeting Room G4, Addenbrook House, Ironmasters Way, Telford, TF3 4NT**

**PRESENT:** Councillors S A W Reynolds (Chair), S Bentley, A Burford, N A M England, V A Fletcher, E J Greenaway, K R Guy and J M Seymour.

**ALSO PRESENT:** F Bottrill, Scrutiny Group Specialist; S Jones, Scrutiny Officer; D Moseley, Scrutiny Officer.

#### **SMB-01      ELECTION OF A VICE-CHAIR**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited those present to introduce themselves.

The Chair sought views from Members as to the appointment of a Vice Chair. In the past, on the rare occasions on which the Chair had not been able to attend, a Chair had been elected at the meeting. Cllr. Bentley said he would like to nominate Cllr. Seymour, but the Chair said she first wanted to establish a view as to whether a Vice-Chair was needed. Cllr. Guy said he was happy to continue with the previous arrangements. Other Members were in agreement and Cllr. Bentley said he was happy to concur with the majority.

**RESOLVED** – that a Vice-Chair not be appointed.

#### **SMB-02      MINUTES**

The Chair asked Cllr. Guy as the only other Member who had been present if he agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 27 March were an accurate record of the meeting, and Cllr. Guy confirmed that they were.

Cllr. Seymour noted from the minutes of the discussion about the Meals on Wheels service that Good Neighbour Service had still not been developed and she requested a report to be brought to the next meeting on the Board. Cllr. Fletcher said that she had heard the contracted provider of the Community Meals service had been charging users and she requested a report on performance of the contract and the charging model. The Scrutiny Group Specialist said that she would make an initial enquiry and that Members could discuss this further during the discussion on the work programme.

**RESOLVED** – that the minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Management Board held on 27 March 2015 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

#### **SMB-03      APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

None

**SMB-04      DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

**SMB-05      SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chair invited the Scrutiny Group Specialist to provide an introduction to the report on the Scrutiny Work Programme attached as Appendix C.

The Scrutiny Group Specialist explained that the report set out the end of year position from the previous Scrutiny Management Board work programme. The usual call for suggestions for the work programme at the start of the municipal year had not happened because of the number of issues carried over and the fact that the on-going CSE review would make up around half of this year's the work programme. The report set out the work that could be supported in terms of the number of meetings per committee which was a crude measure but enabled the Board to allocate resources across the Committees and for Members to decide their work programme. In the past Committees had held a meeting to agree the work programme but it was suggested that this could be done by email so that meeting time was focussed on scrutiny work rather than discussing the work programme.

Cllr. Guy referred Members to page 3 of the report which showed 30 meetings had been estimated for the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee review of CSE. A clear decision had been taken last year to carry out the review and it was essential that it was done properly. Evidence had already been taken from senior managers of relevant agencies, except for the West Midlands Ambulance Service, Shropshire Doctors Co-operative Ltd, South Staffordshire & Shropshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and the Crown Prosecution Service who were due to attend an inquiry day on 21 July. The Committee would then move to taking evidence from front-line staff, volunteers and any other relevant witnesses to get a view from the ground and, importantly, would hear from victims of CSE and their families. He apologised that the review would take up so much time but if the Council was to do this work then it needed to be done properly and adequately resourced. The evidence taking was due to be completed by January 2016 which may free up officer time as the review moved into the report writing stage, but it would take up a significant amount of officer time for the first year of the work programme. He asked other Scrutiny Committees to be sympathetic while work concentrated on CSE so the Committee could do a thorough job looking at the local picture linked to the national picture.

The Chair suggested that the Board could look at a two year work programme recognising that CSE would take a lot of time during the first year so the Committees could prioritise their work over a longer period.

Cllr. Fletcher asked whether the national Goddard review of historic cases of child sexual abuse would play into the CSE review and Cllr. Guy replied that it would. Cllr. Seymour agreed that the CSE review should take priority as a one-off piece of work but she felt that resources needed to be made available to address other important issues on the work programme otherwise it would undermine the scrutiny function. Cllr. Guy said he had discussed resources with the Managing Director and Assistant

Director and he had secured funding for two extra days officer time until the end of December to be reviewed again in September.

The Scrutiny Group Specialist said that based on estimated capacity for the year there would be approximately 18 meetings left over to allocate to the other Committees. If the funding for the extra officer time was extended it would increase capacity but they did not want to over-commit on that basis and plan work that could not then be delivered. The CSE review had taken months to set up and organise and was due to be completed in May. There was a risk of overrun but this was not advisable because information could become out of date if the review carried on.

Cllr. Bentley asked for clarification of the Board's remit in regard to the work programme. The Chair replied that the Board determined the allocation of resources between Committees and could recommend priorities for the work programme. She said that the Committees needed to be flexible and could hold informal or Member-led meetings to do more work and careful scoping would help focus on priorities.

Cllr. Bentley said that scrutiny should consider the issues which have the greatest impact on the community. He took comments on board about the CSE review needing to stick to the completion date but he felt there needed to be on-going work. Cllr. Guy agreed that there needed to be on-going monitoring but the review had a specific focus on how agencies work together and co-ordination between partners such as the police, GPs, the Council etc. Scrutiny had been criticised in the past for only talking to senior managers and they would be talking to front-line staff and victims.

Cllr. Bentley asked if the Committee had come up against obstacles with sharing information because of Data Protection legislation and Cllr. Guy said that according to senior managers there was a good system for sharing information but they would be testing the assertion out with frontline staff.

Cllr. Burford felt it was crucial for the CSE review to reach a conclusion and for on-going monitoring. He noted that the CSE review created a pressure point this year but felt there was scope for the Health & Adult Care Scrutiny Committee and the Joint Health & Overview Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC) to do more in one meeting and to do more joint working. He did not disagree with the headings listed and he was confident that they could be managed so that the CSE review could be prioritised for support.

Cllr. Seymour said that housing was a key issue and she suggested the Housing Allocations Policy and Tenancy Strategy should be a priority for scrutiny as well as the relationship with Registered Social Landlords (RSLs). These were important issues which needed to be looked at and Cllr. Seymour was concerned that they could be neglected. The Chair explained that the previous Scrutiny Management Board had met with RSLs last November and had made a number of recommendations which had gone to Cabinet in March. Cllr. Seymour said it was important to follow up on this work and she expressed concern that the Customer, Community and Partnership Scrutiny Committee had been allocated fewer meetings than other Committees.

Cllr. Guy asked Members whether they thought the number of Scrutiny Management Board meetings could be reduced. The Chair said she would like the Board to meet again before Christmas but suggested there was scope to reduce the number of meetings to 4 or 5 but she would like 'half-termly' progress reports. Cllr. England suggested there should be a minimum of 3 meetings – an initial meeting and mid-year and end of year reports. Cllr. Fletcher said there had been a very good Member briefing on CSE and these sessions were a good way for Members to be kept up to date. She suggested that a report should be requested from the commissioning officer on the Meals on Wheels service now that it had been in place for a year, including feedback from users and the CVS. She said the service could save people's lives by volunteers finding people who have collapsed at home. The Scrutiny Group Specialist noted that the Health & Adult Care and JHOSC work programme would be dominated by the Future Fit (hospital reconfiguration) consultation but a report could be provided for the Committee to decide whether any further work needed to be included in the work programme. An initial enquiry would be made to the service.

Cllr. Fletcher suggested that if the number of meetings were reduced, the Board could convene an informal meeting to consider any urgent matters arising.

The Scrutiny Group Specialist noted that previous Scrutiny Management Boards had brought issues to the Board for scrutiny and she suggested that if Members wished to reduce the number of meetings the Board could pass these items to the Scrutiny Committees and focus on its management role and on holding the Executive to account which was an important scrutiny function and could fill gaps in the work programme.

Cllr. Seymour agreed that the Scrutiny Management Board meetings should be reduced in favour of the Scrutiny Committees but noted that responsibility for scrutiny of Flood & Water Management had been re-allocated from the Board to the Customer, Community and Partnership Scrutiny Committee and as she did not know what was happening in this area to know if this was a priority.

On this basis the Chair proposed that the Scrutiny Management Board should be allocated a further 4 meetings for the year and that the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee should be allocated 30 meetings for the CSE review and this was agreed by the other Members.

Following a discussion about the number of Scrutiny Management Board Meetings it was agreed that it would be planned that there would be 3 Board meetings during 2015/16. A fourth meeting would be held in reserve.

Cllr. Bentley asked Cllr. Guy as Chair of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee whether he was confident that the CSE review would be completed on time or whether there was a possibility it would be extended. Cllr. Guy responded that the timescale was tight but a comprehensive plan was in place to keep the review on track. The main risk of slippage was the meetings with victims or their families and the Committee would be flexible to meet their needs. He remarked that the statutory bodies had been very responsive and the Committee had spoken to top managers from key agencies. Cllr. Fletcher said that safeguarding victims was

paramount. The Scrutiny Group Specialist explained that a wide range of groups were involved in the review including vulnerable people and survivors. There were robust process in place for consulting with vulnerable people and the process had to be signed-off before meetings could take place. The process required a lot of additional work and Members were being asked not to hold meetings during August to allow the work to be planned.

Cllr. Fletcher said there was a need to be careful about language and describing people as 'victims' and Cllr. Guy said the Committee had discussed this already.

The Scrutiny Group Specialist pointed out that the number of meetings proposed in the report included meetings which had already happened as they had displaced work on the CSE review which had consequently fallen about 2 weeks behind and the time needed to be made up.

Cllr Guy gave his apologies and left the meeting at this point.

The Chair suggested that the 6 meetings allocated to the Finance & Enterprise Scrutiny Committee for scrutiny of the budget proposals could potentially be reduced to 4; the timetable had become more compressed with later settlements and the Committee could use informal meetings to decide which issues to look at and which Cabinet members to call in, but members of the Committee would need to support this approach.

Cllr. Burford suggested that joint scrutiny of the adult care budget by the Health & Adult Care and Finance & Enterprise Scrutiny Committees would save 2 meetings. The Health & Adult Care Scrutiny Committee had already had one meeting and Cllr. Burford envisaged needing 2 meetings in the autumn but no more than 2 or 3 from January to May by bringing items together onto one agenda to reduce the overall number of meetings from 8 to 5. The Scrutiny Group Specialist reminded Members that the Health & Adult Care Scrutiny Committee would include meetings of the JHOSC and Cllr. Burford said he would rather keep the meetings allocated to the JHOSC and reduce the allocation to the Health & Adult Care Scrutiny Committee. Cllr. Seymour agreed that work on the adult care budget could be joined up with Finance and Enterprise and she said that more work needed to be joined up between committees.

Cllr. Burford asked Cllr. Fletcher if she thought it was reasonable to reduce the number of Health & Adult Care scrutiny meetings from 8 to 5 and she thought it was. In the past issues such as the Quality Accounts had been considered outside formal meetings to agree comments and Members could work more at home to use up less meeting time.

The Scrutiny Group Specialist summarised the allocations discussed so far as 30 meetings for the Children & Young People CSE review, 3 meetings for the Scrutiny Management Board (2 remaining plus 1 additional meeting if required) and 4 meetings for the Finance & Enterprise Scrutiny Committee totalling 39 meetings which would leave 9 meetings between the Health & Adult Care Scrutiny Committee and the Customer, Community and Partnership committees.

Cllr. Bentley asked for clarification about how many meetings needed to be allocated as the report showed the total number of meetings as 59. The Scrutiny Group Specialist explained that the report set out the number of meetings that would be required to cover all the items in the work programme but the actual number of recommended meetings that could be supported was estimated at 48 and it was up to the Members to decide what to do with them. Cllr. Bentley asked how this had been arrived at when there had been 50 meetings in previous years with less resource and the Scrutiny Group Specialist said it had been adjusted down slightly to take account of the extra work involved in the CSE review which would take up the 2 extra days of officer time per week and would involve everyone in the team.

Cllr. Seymour asked whether the JHOSC meetings organised and hosted by Shropshire were counted and the Scrutiny Group Specialist replied that they were because there was still a lot of work to do even if Telford was not hosting the meeting; the work was not just passed on to officers in Shropshire.

Cllr. Seymour was concerned that if the Health & Adult Care Scrutiny Committee had 6 meetings it would only leave 3 for the Customer, Community & Partnership committee which was less than the other committees and she asked Cllr. N England as the Chair for his view on this.

Cllr. England considered the list of items for the Committee and noted that the Committee had already had one meeting to look at the Bus Subsidy Policy and consultation on the Local Plan.

Cllr. Seymour asked if other Members felt that Flood & Water Management was a key issue. The Scrutiny Officer, S Jones, said that reports had been brought to the Board and other Scrutiny Committees in the past and Members had been assured that the Council was ahead of the game on this issue and no key concerns had been flagged up by scrutiny. It had been 2 years since the last update to the Board. Cllr. Fletcher said work had been done with parishes on this. Drawing on his previous experience as a past Chair of the Strategic Flood Board, Cllr. Bentley agreed that this was an area where Telford & Wrekin Council was leading the way nationally and felt that this issue could be de-prioritised. The Scrutiny Group Specialist suggested this could be moved to the second year of a 2 year work programme.

Cllr. Seymour noted that scrutiny of the Local Enterprise Partnership was in the Customer, Community & Partnership Scrutiny Committee work programme and asked about scrutiny powers. The Scrutiny Group Specialist explained there was a Marches Enterprise Joint Committee, which is a formal joint committee of the three local authority leaders, and decisions of the Joint Committee are subject to scrutiny by the three local authority scrutiny committees which can act individually to call-in decisions of the Joint Committee. This power had been exercised recently by Herefordshire.

Cllr. N England put forward a suggestion for the Customer, Community & Partnership Scrutiny Committee to review performance of the waste services contract, possibly with the Finance & Enterprise Scrutiny Committee to look at the costs.

The Chair suggested scrutiny of the Welfare Reforms could be done jointly with Finance & Enterprise Scrutiny Committee.

Cllr. Bentley said that it should be left to each Scrutiny Committee to decide what they wanted to do. He felt that 48 meetings a year was easily achievable and there should be flexibility for the Committees to decide between themselves how to use the unallocated 9 meetings.

Cllr. Burford agreed with the need to set meetings so that the work programme was not overloaded. If other meetings were needed they could be arranged as Member-led meetings. He asked other Scrutiny Chairs to make sure they stuck to the numbers agreed.

The Scrutiny Group Specialist summarised the allocations discussed so far as Scrutiny Management Board (3 plus 1 additional meeting if required 4), Children & Young People (30), Health & Adult Care and JHOSC (6), Finance & Enterprise (4), Customer, Community & Partnership (3). She added that no provision had been made for Call-in.

Cllr. Bentley remarked that the Council had diminished support for scrutiny over the last few years so that scrutiny had less of an impact. He suggested the Board could make a recommendation to Council to increase resources for scrutiny.

The Chair replied that resources did not always have to be officers and that members could do more. Cllr. Greenaway noted that she had been involved in a lot of scrutiny work which had not involved officers and Cllr. Bentley agreed that sometimes officer support was only needed to clarify legalities.

**RESOLVED – that support for scrutiny meetings be allocated as follows:**  
**Scrutiny Management Board (3 plus 1 additional meeting if required)**  
**Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee (30)**  
**Health & Adult Care and JHOSC Scrutiny Committee (6)**  
**Finance & Enterprise Scrutiny Committee (4)**  
**Customer, Community & Partnership Scrutiny Committee (3)**

Cllr. Bentley gave his apologies for the remainder of the meeting and left the meeting.

## **SMB-06      SCRUTINY HANDBOOK**

The Chair asked members to consider the proposed changes to the Scrutiny Handbook, circulated as Appendix B, to bring it up to date.

Members suggested a number of changes and corrections which would be made by the Scrutiny Team and the document re-circulated for approval. The following key points were discussed:

- Members considered a suggestion from Cllr. Seymour to reconsider the name of the Customer, Community & Partnership Scrutiny Committee. She felt the name was too long and suggested 'Housing & Communities' would pick up the

Committee's specific remit which members of the public would be able to identify with but was broad enough to encompass other areas of work. Cllr. England replied that the work the Committee did was more important than its name and the Chair considered that the use of "communities" in the title encompassed the housing element. Cllr England considered that over the years a number of Committees had long names and were generally referred to by acronyms.

- Cllr. Fletcher sought clarification on the process for changing the name of a committee and whether it would need to go to the Council's Constitution Committee to make a recommendation to Full Council. The Scrutiny Officer replied that as long as the minimum requirements set out in the Council's Constitution were met, the Scrutiny Management Board may make changes after consultation with the Scrutiny Assembly.
- Members agreed that the sections relating to the number and type of co-optee vacancies on each committee needed to be clarified and it was agreed that a summary table would be included in the Handbook.
- The Scrutiny Group Specialist sought views on whether the recruitment process on the Policy for Co-opting Scrutiny Members needed to be changed for the forthcoming review of co-optees. Co-optees had been contacted to make them aware of the review and the majority had expressed an interest in being reconsidered. The existing process was robust and included interviews by Chairs which would be time consuming and would need to be built in. The recruitment process would apply to all co-optees other than the statutory co-optees on the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee and co-optees nominated by organisations with standing representation such as Healthwatch and the Senior Citizen's Forum on the Health & Adult Care Scrutiny Committee. Members agreed that the recruitment process would remain unchanged for the review and that confirming co-opted members of the JHOSC should be prioritised.
- There was a discussion about the proposed change to the time period for contacting co-optees about non-attendance from six months to 2 meetings in a row without apology. On balance Members agreed this was about right although some judgement would be needed so that attendance was linked to contribution as co-optees could make a valuable contribution and there may be genuine reasons for non-attendance. It was also suggested that the relevant Scrutiny Chair may contact the co-optee about non-attendance.
- The Scrutiny Group Specialist sought views on establishing a requirement for co-optees to have an email address as this was the main method of communication and would become increasingly important as the Council moved towards paperless meetings. Members agreed this was a reasonable requirement but so that no-one was excluded other email arrangements could be explored, for instance in the case of Town and Parish Council representatives, the relevant Clerk's email address could be used..

**RESOLVED** – that the changes to the Scrutiny Handbook agreed at the meeting be made by the Scrutiny Team and re-circulated to members for approval.

The meeting ended at 12.15pm

**Chairman:** .....

**Date:** .....