

My Ref: T: Scrutiny/PRAP/Comm Papers/Correspondence

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Councillor Huw Thomas,  
Leader  
Cardiff Council,  
County Hall,  
Cardiff  
CF10 4UW



County Hall  
Cardiff,  
CF10 4UW  
Tel: (029) 2087 2087

Neuadd y Sir  
Caerdydd,  
CF10 4UW  
Ffôn: (029) 2087 2088

Dear Councillor Thomas,

### **Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee: 3 October 2018**

As Chair of the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee I wish to thank you for attending Committee to consider the WAO review of Scrutiny, *Fit for the Future?* On behalf of the Members, this letter captures the Committee's agreed comments and observations.

#### **Current position**

The Committee considers that the WAO was clear that scrutiny in Cardiff is well developed and there is a good platform on which to build. This was further illustrated by the attendance of senior Cabinet Members and managers for consideration of this item, a clear demonstration that the profile of scrutiny in Cardiff is high.

We note the scrutiny function's self-assessment since the Council received the outcome of its review has led to the development of an action plan to address the WAO proposals for improvement, and that the WAO consider this a positive response. The action plan will provide Members with an effective monitoring tool for the Committee to evaluate progress over time.

#### **Impact**

The Committee notes that the WAO consider the impact, and outcomes, of scrutiny are important, and there is an opportunity to innovate to deliver even greater impact.

We take on board the following steers:

- A task and finish approach is very much endorsed as having greater impact.
- Scrutiny Forward Work Programmes could be more detailed.
- There may be improvements to be made in the prioritisation of Scrutiny Forward Work Programmes.

During this Committee's 2018/19 work programming discussions Members prioritised that a task and finish group would review the existing impact of scrutiny in Cardiff, and how we can best capture the function's impact going forward, within a difficult financial context, with a view to illustrating scrutiny's invest to save potential for the Council and its governance.

### **Innovation**

The Committee takes on board that to deliver greater impact the scrutiny function is encouraged to become more innovative in its activities. The following suggestions emerged from discussion that we endorse as good practice, and believe illustrates that the Council has already started innovating in its approach to scrutiny.

- The development of scrutiny stakeholder lists is important, and we urge thought is given to this.
- A trial is underway to bring young people into the heart of scrutiny with a Cardiff Youth Council representative invited to attend all meetings of the Children and Young Peoples Scrutiny Committee.

We were referred for innovative examples of scrutiny to the Centre for Public Scrutiny, scrutiny networks, and other councils. A particular example referred to by WAO was Lincolnshire County Council's work on dementia strategy, where sufferers were invited to contribute prior to a scrutiny meeting, and their views fed into the consideration via scrutiny members.

### **Webcasting**

In respect of proposal for improvement P4, *The Council should publish final versions of scrutiny committee meeting minutes on its website in a more timely manner*, the

Committee considers that investing in more webcasting of scrutiny meetings may be preferable to shortening the turnaround for the publication of meeting minutes. However, we acknowledge there is a significant cost attached to increasing webcasting, and note that audio minutes might prove more affordable.

We understand there is a Welsh Government aspiration to increase democratic accessibility. The Environmental Scrutiny Committee is particularly keen to retain full webcasting coverage and continue the improvement in public engagement achieved in the past year. In view of the potential for increasing costs in financially challenging times, Members would urge that WAO colleagues make the point to Welsh Government that such an aspiration to increase webcasting will require funding.

### **Models & Resourcing**

I invited the Scrutiny Chairs of all committees to attend for consideration of this item. Those present expressed a view that the current five Committee model of scrutiny within the Council's Constitution enables scrutiny agendas to be constrained to an appropriate length. We were pleased to hear that you endorse this as a good model to date, and that you believe that a strong scrutiny function can make a valuable input to the Councils decision-making process.

We are keen to establish WAO's view as to whether the routine monitoring of finance and performance currently performed by scrutiny committees would weaken internal governance should scrutiny committees commit resources to focussing primarily on task & finish inquiries into high risk issues.

The Committee noted that, whilst WAO would not commit to a view about the number of scrutiny committees and level of resource required to deliver effective internal challenge and governance, they were of the view that scrutiny does not need to be carried out in a formal committee environment. They would therefore encourage the examination of options for more informal structures of scrutiny. The Committee considers that the existing scrutiny model has been created on the

premise that Councillors are full-time, whereas many Cardiff Councillors are in employment.

Once again, on behalf of the Committee, please pass my sincere thanks to all who attended PRAP Scrutiny Committee for the consideration of the WAO review of Scrutiny, *Fit for the Future?* We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,



**COUNCILLOR DAVID WALKER**  
**CHAIR, POLICY REVIEW & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

cc Members of the Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee  
Councillor Chris Weaver, Cabinet Member, Finance, Modernisation & Performance  
Councillor Ramesh Patel, Chair, Environmental Scrutiny Committee  
Councillor Mary McGarry, Chair, Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee  
Councillor Lee Bridgeman, Chair, Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee  
Councillor Nigel Howells, Chair, Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee  
Paul Orders, Chief Executive  
Christine Salter, Corporate Director Resources  
Joseph Reay, Head of Performance & Partnerships  
Gary Jones, Head of Democratic Services Sara-Jane  
Byrne, Wales Audit Office  
Ian Phillips, Wales Audit Office  
Samantha Clements, Wales Audit Office  
Principal Scrutiny Officers  
Debi Said, Cabinet Support Officer  
Joanne Watkins, Cabinet Office Manager