

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

Date: 2 April 2015

Councillor Phil Bale
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Dear Councillor Bale,

POLICY REVIEW & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 31 March 2015

Members wish to pass on their thanks to you and officers for attending the above meeting to discuss the Council's proposed response to the Welsh Government White Paper 'Power to Local People'.

Members are extremely disappointed to have only received the proposed response at 1.00pm on the day of Committee. This is unacceptable as it does not allow time for Members to consider the response or for there to be a meaningful examination of the issues detailed in the 28 page response. Whilst Members appreciate your apology for this, Members feel that it was possible for a response to have been provided in time to be included in the papers for this meeting, if there had been proper planning that took into account the scrutiny committee deadlines; the consultation from Welsh Government opened 3rd February 2015.

With the caveat that Members only had a limited time to consider the proposed response, Members have the following points to make:

- Members recognise that the White Paper deals with the landscape of local government across Wales and that, whilst there are Cardiff specific issues, the White Paper attempts to deal with Wales-wide issues.
- Members raise a note of caution that, inevitably, individual local authority responses will focus on issues that are specific to their area and needs and that this might not be the best way forward in designing Wales-wide policy, particularly as these local authorities may soon cease to exist in their current form.
- With regard to the proposed response to the White Paper suggestion that Call-Ins will only be permitted of Key Decisions, Members wish to express their opposition to this. Members believe the Call in process in Cardiff has worked well to date, enabling Members to call in issues that may not be counted as Key Decisions but which have great local significance. Members were interested to hear Marie Rosenthal's summary of the approach to Call in in England and believe that this approach merits further investigation.
- With regard to the proposals in the White Paper to have a Leader's Manifesto and Corporate Plan, Members wish to express their support for this proposal and for the suggestion that the Corporate Plan details how officers will



implement the wishes of the administration. Members do not accept that the proposals will become unnecessarily bureaucratic or resource intensive. Members believe that the linkages between these documents and the changes to the improvement environment has the potential to move the landscape to one where it is easier to hold responsible people to account, which is to be welcomed.

- With regard to the White Paper proposal to rule out further devolution of powers to local authorities until any structural reforms have been undertaken, Members agree that this is sensible from an all Wales perspective and therefore disagree with the Council's proposed response.

To re-cap for ease, the Committee therefore asks that you reconsider the Council's response to the White Paper, as follows:

- Call ins – amend the proposed response to reflect the fact that Members believe that these should apply to any decision where there are sufficient grounds for a call in and that the English approach to Call ins merits further investigation to see whether there are useful lessons that could be applied in Wales
- Corporate Planning, Review and Improvement – amend the proposed response to reflect the fact that Members agree with the proposal to have a Leader's Manifesto and revised Corporate Plan and do not agree that these will place an undue burden on local authorities.
- Devolution – amend the proposed response to reflect the fact that Members support the position as set out in White Paper.

Many thanks again for attending the meeting; I would be grateful for a response on the points raised above.

Yours sincerely,



COUNCILLOR NIGEL HOWELLS
CHAIR, POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

cc Marie Rosenthal
Jayne Davis

Martin Hamilton
Debi Said

Dylan Owen