

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

Date: 13 December 2016



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Councillor Dan De'Ath
Cabinet Member Safety, Skills & Engagement,
Cardiff Council,
County Hall
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Dear Councillor De'Ath,

Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee: 6 December 2016 ODP – Review of Scrutiny

As Chair of the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee I wish to thank you for attending Committee to consult on the Review of Scrutiny. Members welcomed the opportunity to engage with early emerging models, and following their discussion at the Way Forward have asked me to pass on the following comments and observations to inform final proposals to the Constitution Committee in February 2017.

Model preference

The Committee is firmly of the view that there is merit in retaining the principal of 4 - 5 Scrutiny Committees. Several Members feel the existing model should be the preferred option, due to its overarching success over many years. However, all Members accept that in retaining the existing model there are grounds for tweaking the Terms of Reference of all Committees.

Whilst endorsing the status quo, Members have some specific views.

- All Members feel the existence of a Constitution Committee and a Democratic Services Committee is significant duplication and unnecessary overlap.
- We consider the implications of Partnership scrutiny are still an unknown
- We consider 4 Committees could work (and reduce costs), where the Economy and Culture Scrutiny Committee relieves pressure on a combined Social Services committee by effectively taking responsibility for housing and skills development
- Some Members are keen to retain two Social Services Scrutiny Committees,
- Some Members consider Housing should remain alongside Adult Services.

- Some Members wish to highlight that the PRAP type Committee should undertake cross cutting scrutiny, whilst not duplicating the work of other committees. We feel there needs to be closer overarching working between Committees to reduce such duplication.

Scrutiny Training

The Committee feels strongly that basic Scrutiny training should be mandatory, and Members nominated for Scrutiny Committee positions should be required to complete the training prior to attendance at their first meeting.

Resources

The Committee takes on board the expectation that the 2017/18 budget will realise the £50k reduction agreed in the 2016/17 Scrutiny budget, but given the essential work that Scrutiny undertakes Members see a need to enhance rather than reduce arrangements.

Balancing Formal and Informal Scrutiny

In relation to the balance between formal Committee and informal Task and Finish (T&F) work the Committee feels it is important to factor T&F work into all proposed models. However, we feel that T& F meetings are not public forums and therefore an over dependency will not deliver our 'Open' Council commitment. Furthermore, Members consider an expansion of T&F work will not resolve the resource challenges currently experienced. The implication is that T&F work is more likely to be undertaken during the afternoon, to ensure witness access, which will conflict with the responsibilities of younger Councillors. Some Members wish to suggest there is an opportunity to access support for T& F from non-scrutiny back bench Members.

Size of Committees

Importantly the Committee is concerned about the number of seats on Scrutiny Committees. Specifically, we feel the current issue of vacant seats has not been a problem in previous administrations. The current difficulty filling seats is therefore perhaps a unique situation and we would err caution before making significant changes to the size of Committees. Members feel the position could change dramatically in May 2017, depending on the circumstances of newly elected Members.

Drivers for change

Members are keen to clarify the real drivers for Scrutiny change. We note you consider resources; statutory responsibility for scrutiny of the PSB; and a 50k saving. We feel it is important to separate outcomes from enablers and we are not convinced all drivers referred to in the papers are important enough to determine a new model.

Embedding Scrutiny

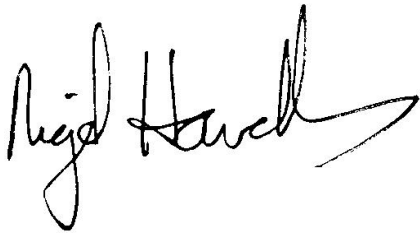
The Committee wishes to highlight the importance of improving the embeddedness of Scrutiny. We feel this could be achieved in the following ways:

- By improving back bench and front bench links to policy formulation;
- By improving the monitoring of how Scrutiny recommendations are embedding.
- By linking Scrutiny recommendations to the PPDR's of Senior Managers

As a small aside, thank you for consulting many stakeholder groups on the proposals. May we request that Independent Councillors are also consulted.

Once again, on behalf of the Committee, I wish to thank yourself, the Director of Governance and Legal Services, Davina Fiore, and the Scrutiny & Equalities Manager for your support in bringing this matter forward for Scrutiny. The Committee looks forward to maintaining good communication with yourself and future administrations to preserve and improve the role of Scrutiny in the Council's governance arrangements.

Yours sincerely,



COUNCILLOR NIGEL HOWELLS
CHAIR, POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

cc

Members of the Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee;
Chairs of all Scrutiny Committees;
Davina Fiore, Director Governance & Legal Services;
Paul Keeping, Scrutiny & Equalities Manager;
Ian Allwood, Head of Finance;
Clare DeGuara, Cabinet Support Manager;.
Alison Taylor, Cabinet Support Office.