

**ORGANISATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 10 JANUARY 2018**

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## **ORGANISATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 10 JANUARY 2018**

#### **Present:**

Councillor D Skinner .....	Chair
Councillor T Mansbridge .....	Vice-Chair
Councillor J Barry	Councillor R Welton
“ A Dale	“ B Wright
“ L Robinson	

#### **Also Present**

Sue Veerman – Overview and Scrutiny Manager  
Sarah Cottam – Senior Governance Officer (Acting)

#### **464 Apologies for Absence**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor B Ridgway.

#### **465 Declarations of Interest**

Members were requested to declare the existence and nature of any disclosable pecuniary interest and/or other interest, not already on their register of interests, in any item on the agenda and withdraw from the meeting at the appropriate time.

There were no interests declared at this meeting.

#### **466 Minutes of Last Meeting**

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of the Organisation Scrutiny Committee held on 1 November 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

#### **467 Exclusion of Public**

RESOLVED – That the public be excluded from the meeting during the discussion of the following item of business to avoid the disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1, Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006).

#### **468 Scrutiny Review**

The Committee carried out an informal discussion session with members of staff in connection to the Scrutiny Review into Job Evaluation and Associated Benefits.

Items raised during discussion included:-

- Pay, flexi, annual leave;
- Staff morale;
- Restructure in departments;
- Staff benefits ie free gym use and swimming pool use;
- Strategic Alliance and joint working.

The Committee thanked the members of staff for attending the discussion group and contributing to the review.

**RESOLVED** – That the Organisation Scrutiny Committee notes the information gathered from staff as part of the Scrutiny Review into Job Evaluation and Associated Benefits.

(Members/Overview & Scrutiny Manager)

**469 Re-admission of the Public**

**RESOLVED** – That the public be re-admitted to the meeting.

**470 Discussion on – The Effectiveness of Local Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committees Report – House of Commons – Communities and Local Government Committee**

The Committee considered the House of Commons – Communities and Local Government Committee's report on the Effectiveness of Local Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Overview and Scrutiny Committees were introduced by the Local Government Act 2000 and were tasked with acting as a counterweight to the increased centralised power of the new executive arrangements. Whilst some authorities were not covered by the changes brought in by the Act, the Leader and Cabinet system was the predominant model of governance in English local authorities. However, since the Localism Act 2011, Councils had the option of reverting to a Committee systems of governance. Some authorities that had chosen to do so had expressed dissatisfaction with the new executive arrangements, including concerns at the limited effectiveness of Scrutiny. Noting the concerns and that there had not been a comprehensive assessment of how Scrutiny Committees operated, the House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee decided to conduct an inquiry. The Terms of Reference placed an emphasis on considering factors such as the ability of Committees to hold decision makers to account, the impact of party politics on Scrutiny, resourcing committees and the ability of Council Scrutiny Committees to have an oversight of services delivered by external organisations.

The report outlined several proposed revisions to the Governance guidance on Scrutiny Committee which were:-

- That Overview and Scrutiny Committees should report to an Authority's full Council meeting rather than to the Executive, mirroring the relationship between select committees and parliament;
- That Scrutiny Committees and the Executive must be distinct and that executive councillors should not participate in Scrutiny other than witnesses, even if external partners are being scrutinised;
- That Councillors working on Scrutiny Committees should have access to financial and performance data held by an Authority, and that this access should not be restricted for reasons of commercial sensitivity;
- That Scrutiny Committees should be supported by officers that are able to operate with independence and offer impartial advice to committees. There should be greater parity of esteem between Scrutiny and the Executive, and committees should have the same access to expertise and time of senior officers and the chief executive as their cabinet counterpart;
- That members of the public and service users have a fundamental role in the process and that their participation should be encouraged and facilitated by Councils.

The Committee held discussions around the proposed revisions to the government guidance on Scrutiny Committees.

**RESOLVED** – That Committee notes the House of Commons Communities and Local Government Report into the Effectiveness of Local Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

#### **471 Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Organisation Scrutiny Committee will take place on 28 February 2018 at 3.00 pm.