

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE

Meeting: 8 November 2021

At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

Councillor Mark Roberts (Chair) in the chair; Councillors Keith Holloway, Oliver Johnstone, John McGahan and Wendy Meikle.

1. MINUTES

The notes of the Meeting of Members of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee held on 27 September 2021 (copies of which had been circulated) were approved as a correct record.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors and officers were invited to declare any interests which they had in any of the items on the agenda for the meeting.

No declarations of interest were made.

3. CALL-IN

There were no call-in items to consider.

4. PORTFOLIO DASHBOARDS

The Chair reported that this item had been placed on the agenda at his request.

The Scrutiny Committee was asked to discuss the inclusion of a standing item on the agenda for each of the five service-based scrutiny committees in relation to the portfolio dashboards to allow members to raise any issues with regard to performance. It was proposed that links to the live portfolio dashboards would be published with the agenda to assist members in their discussions.

The Chair confirmed that so as to avoid duplication, it would not be proposed to include such an item on the agenda where one of the quarterly portfolio performance reports was already listed for consideration at the meeting.

Craig Hughes (CSS Head of Service Strategy & Commissioning) and Phil Taylor (CSS Manager, Strategy & Commissioning) attended the meeting to provide an overview of the portfolio dashboards and their functionality.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- In response to a query about how the portfolio dashboards could be accessed by the public, it was stated that at present the only links into the system were provided through the quarterly portfolio performance reports.

- Work was ongoing as part of the 'Big Stockport Picture' data portal to make the portfolio dashboards more readily accessible.
- It was commented that members may require some refresher training on the use of the dashboards to make best use of the information available to them.

RESOLVED – That the Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer (Legal and Democratic Governance) be requested to make arrangements for the inclusion of a standing item on the agenda for each of the five service-based scrutiny committees in relation to the portfolio dashboards with the exception of any meeting where one of the quarterly portfolio performance reports was already listed for consideration.

5. VENUE FOR SCRUTINY MEETINGS

The Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer (Legal and Democratic Governance) and Director of Public Health submitted a joint report (copies of which had been circulated) providing a response to the scrutiny committee's request for a criteria for the return to face-to-face meetings of scrutiny committees; and a mechanism for ameliorating concerns expressed by members with regard to the constitutional position of undertaking scrutiny on an informal basis.

The Director of Public Health stated that it was very difficult to identify a specific criteria for a return to face-to-face meetings and that this was something that the government had declined to do as part of its plans for the winter period. It was also important that any advice given was consistent across the range of environments in which the council operated and that any decision that was taken needed to be based on assessment of the individual risk associated with any given activity.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- It was noted that the Leader of the Council had given an undertaking at the last meeting of the Council Meeting on 7 October 2021 that all comments made at remote scrutiny meetings would be given the same weight by the Cabinet as if they had been made at face-to-face meetings.
- Concern was expressed in relation to the impact of a return to face-to-face meetings on vulnerable members of the Council.
- It was suggested that where meetings could be held remotely, and business still be transacted, then this would best obviate any potential health concerns.
- In contrast, it was stated that covid was likely to remain part of the public health landscape into the medium-term and that it was not practicable or reasonable to predicate a return to face-to-face meetings on the eradication of covid.
- Appropriate mitigation measures could be put in place to significantly reduce the risk of transmission. It was noted that other committee meetings had taken place within the civic complex with social distancing measures, the provision of screens and hand sanitiser dispensers on the desks.
- The current number of members of staff working 'in the office' was averaging approximately 22%.
- It was commented that scrutiny had functioned well while operating remotely and there had not been a diminution in the quality of the scrutiny that had been undertaken.

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- A discussion took place in relation to the benefits that had been derived from remote meetings, with specific reference the ability to more readily seek contributions from representatives outside the council.
- Hybrid technology was being actively explored as a means of ensuring such contributions could continue to be made at such a time that the government introduced new legislation.
- It was suggested that the run up to the Christmas period might not be the most appropriate time to return to face-to-face meetings in the light of the potential for an increase in cases associated with more contact during the festive period, and that should members be minded to return to such meetings this should be in the new year.

RESOLVED – (1) That the forthcoming cycle of scrutiny committee meetings continue to be held on a remote basis.

(2) That, subject to any advice or instruction from the government in relation to working from home, the next meeting of this scrutiny committee on 13 December 2021, and the subsequent round of service-based scrutiny committees commencing on 17 January 2022 be held as face-to-face meetings.

The meeting closed at 7.07 pm