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**PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
STATEMENT 2013/14
CHAIR – COUNCILLOR MARTIN BENNETT**

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1. Summary

- 1.1 This paper sets out the annual statement for the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee. It provides a view of development and work done in 2013/14 and the plans for 2014/15 including some of current key work programme topics.

REPORT

2. What has happened in 2013/14

- 2.1 During the year the Council has continued the process of Transformation – changing the ways in which a number of things are done, culminating with the Council's integrated Business Plan and Financial Statement. Changes have also taken place to enable decision making to occur when it is required; reducing the reliance on scheduled meetings.
- 2.2 Performance Management Scrutiny Committee and Scrutiny at Shropshire Council in general has therefore also been challenged by these changes. The response to the changes has included taking account of the pace and scale of change and the need to develop to continue to be a Critical Friend. In order to achieve this, the flexibility and application of appropriate and practicable approaches to enable proactive Scrutiny that adds value to the Council and Communities have been in focus, as have options to try to get a greater involvement from all non executive members.

At its worst, local government scrutiny can be a way to tie backbench councillors up and keep them busy while

executive councillors get on with the real business of running the council. At its best, it is a vital component of good governance and improves councils' decision-making, service provision and cost-effectiveness¹

- 2.3 Perhaps one of the most significant changes to the way in which Scrutiny is developing is a move to Task and Finish Groups, and a number of these have been established during the year. Council agreed that Task and Finish Groups established under Scrutiny need not be politically balanced, nor is there a requirement for them to have Members from, or be chaired by, a Member from a Scrutiny Committee. An Open Call is put out seeking Members who are interested or have some knowledge/experience of the issue, and are willing to put the time in to do the work.
- 2.4 The development of the concept of Member Working Groups, tasked to complete a piece of work, be it investigation, review, or participation in service redesign, was tested during the review of the Business and Financial Plans, taking up the offer of the Leader to establish "Rapid Action Groups." A number of these groups, operating under the auspices of Scrutiny are following up on their work.
- 2.5 The Officer and Member evaluation sessions of these Rapid Action Groups, showed a marked similarity in opinions in what had worked well and why, and what had not – and why. The evaluation has helped to identify the principles that should be adopted to enable a flexible and practicable model of Scrutiny to be used in the Authority.
- 2.6 At the same time Member feedback on what they like and dislike in Scrutiny work, suggests strongly that more Scrutiny activity should be taking place outside of the formal committee meetings using these Member Working Groups, to explore the issues *where they exist and where the people we need to speak to are*. The work undertaken by the Discretionary Housing Payments Task and Finish Group is an excellent example of how Scrutiny can be done differently and outside the constraints and of a formal committee meeting in Shirehall.
- 2.7 The pilot work done by the RAG's has begun the process of helping Scrutiny be more proactive and be involved before the decision is made through
- working effectively with Portfolio Holders
 - adding value through constructive critical friend challenge before decision are made, and
 - making the links to the Council's Outcomes and Change Programme
- 2.8 Of particular note is the group working with the Portfolio Holder Performance to develop ways of making key information on performance more accessible and understandable. Performance Management Scrutiny Committee is encouraging Scrutiny (and non-Scrutiny) Members to use this information to

¹ Cllr Andy Hull 2012 LGiU/CCLA Scrutineer of the Year award winner.

help them identify issues and topics to explore with Portfolio Holder(s), Director(s), Managers and others who are pertinent to what needs to be discussed including partners, providers and the users of the services.

- 2.9 Another key focus that is essential for the effective use of the Officer and Member Scrutiny resource is for the Committee through their work programmes to be clearer about the 'what' and 'why' of scrutiny topics. To this end, Scrutiny Chairs agreed a pro-forma for Members to use which provides a template so that they can clearly express the extent of the issue, the method of scrutiny suggested and the outcomes expected. This has been sent to at least one Member recently who commented that *"the template is most useful as it will assist me to answer the questions as fully... as possible to enable others to judge the appropriateness of my request"*.
- 2.10 Effective work programming is the essential bedrock of an effective Scrutiny function. As the Centre for Public Scrutiny makes clear:

*"Scrutiny committee meetings take effort to resource. The physical attendance at a meeting of members and officers (which is expensive, particularly in councils whose committees meet in the evening), the time spent by officers in preparing reports and collating agendas, and other ancillary activity (such as printing) mean that time spent at committee meetings must be well used. This means that they should add value, through securing tangible outcomes that have a positive impact on the lives of local people."*²

3.0 What is planned for 2014/15

- 3.1 As the Council changes, so Scrutiny continues to need to develop. The speed of change to how the Council carries out its business, and designs and commissions or provides services requires the development of different and flexible opportunities for Members to identify potential topics. There are a number of these being developed.
- 3.2 The Council agreed the recommendation of the Scrutiny Review Task and Finish Group for there to be meeting of all non-executive Members and the Scrutiny Chairs *"to allow a two way exchange of items for potential scrutiny intervention/ consideration"*. Work to develop this has been underway over the past year with particular emphasis on where and when it should be located in the Municipal year and the committee cycle, especially given the development of the Council's Integrated Business Plan and the Financial Strategy. With the Forward Plan, these documents provide the basis for the development of the Scrutiny Committee work programmes. The intention is that these meetings take place twice a year roughly 6 months apart, to allow sufficient time for Scrutiny Committees to undertake work and pursue their agreed work programmes.

² Centre for Public Scrutiny Practice Guide 7

3.3 At the same time Officers have been working on a specific Scrutiny page for the intranet, on which it is intended to post the work programmes for the Scrutiny Committees, a copy of the pro-forma for requests, and other help and guidance. The aim is that all Members whether part of Scrutiny or not, can remain aware of what is being undertaken, and what will be undertaken. This is being tested before being released to Members.

- 3.4 Members now have a variety of ways to raise matters for Scrutiny:
- As a referral to Scrutiny as the answer to a Question from Members at Council
 - Through a Motion on Notice by a Member to Council.
 - Referenced from a Cabinet Member – having been raised as an issue by a Member.
 - Request for inclusion on a Scrutiny Agenda (following the pro-forma to specify the matter).
 Putting forward items as a committee member when the work programme is being considered
 The Leaders of the Opposition Groups can suggest items as part of their regular Agenda item on the Scrutiny Chairs Meetings, bringing forward suggestions on behalf of their Group Members
 - The Intranet Page (when active) will allow a virtual referral by a Member.

3.5 The work programme for the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee is structured around topics relating to how the Council is changing, as well as more regular items that help us to understand the impact of the change and whether the required and planned change is being achieved. These latter topics may identify future items for inclusion in the Work Programme of this or the other Scrutiny Committees.

Change Topics	Regular items
Public Service Network	Quarterly Performance Management Report
Mobile and Flexible working	Financial Strategy and the Integrated Business Plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • October 2014 - 6 month view of progress • December 2014/January 2015 – updates for 2014/15
End to end review of how the Council uses information	