

County and Unitary Councils' Officer Overview and Scrutiny Network

Minutes

MEETING	COUNTY & UNITARY COUNCILS' OFFICER OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY NETWORK
DATE	FRIDAY 16 SEPTEMBER 2022, 11.00 AM – 12.35 PM
VENUE	VIRTUAL (MICROSOFT TEAMS)
PRESENT	John Cade (Chairman), Paul Thistlewood (Secretary), Megan Tuckwell (Minutes) (Isle of Wight), Chris Angus (Northumberland), Katherine Bailey (Suffolk), Ben Baugh (Herefordshire), Charlotte Cameron (Peterborough), Michael Carr, Andy Carswell (Warwickshire), Andrew Clayton (Milton Keynes), George Dare (Dorset), Martin Elliot (Nottinghamshire), Ninesh Edwards (Sussex), Charlie Fisher (Devon), John Greenbank (Blackpool), Wayne Hemmingway (Medway), Alex Holgate (Hull), Janet Howard (Newcastle), Theresa Harden (Suffolk), Ross Jago (Plymouth), Emma James (Worcestershire), Martin Jenks (East Sussex), Tracy Johnson (Lincolnshire), Justin Long (Essex), Sean Nicholson (Northumberland), Gordon Oliver (West Berks), Mark Pirnie (Southampton), Ross Pike (Surrey), Samantha Parker (Lancashire), Peter Randall, Elizabeth Richardson (Milton Keynes), Rebecca Saunders-Thompson (Stockton-on-Tees), Helen Taber-French (Suffolk), Michael Turner (Medway), Fred Whitehouse (Devon), Mel White (Isle of Wight), Stacey Worthington (Telford & Wrekin)
GUESTS	Annette Aiken, Camilla de Bernhardt Lane, Ed Hammond, (CfGS)

1. INTRODUCTION BY THE CHAIRMAN AND HOUSEKEEPING

The chairman welcomed all parties and the secretary to the network gave an outline of the proceedings for the virtual session. The chairman reflected on the passing of Her Majesty the Queen.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2022 were noted. Ed Hammond provided an update on the implementation of the Health and Care Act and the changes to health scrutiny regulations and guidance particularly in relation to joint-scrutiny and the relationship with ICS's.

3. CENTRE FOR GOVERNANCE AND SCRUTINY UPDATE

Ed Hammond (CfGS) provided an update on the Centres activities since the last meeting (including staffing arrangements) and activities planned for 2022. Upcoming publications would include guidance on effective council constitutions, the operation of call-in, the operation of full council meetings, the local government boundary commission, and mayoral governance. Support was ongoing to authorities and regional scrutiny networks. Discussion took place regarding electoral reviews.

4. NEW GUIDANCE ON CALL IN ARRANGEMENTS

Ed Hammond (CfGS) outlined the work of the CfGS in undertaking a review of call-in arrangements prior to the issuing of new national guidance. Colleagues were invited to share experiences and views on what best practice should look like. It was noted that widely call-in's had been less frequent since the pandemic. Discussion took place regarding cabinet-scrutiny protocols, Councillor Call for Action's, and executive decisions.

5. STATUTORY GUIDANCE ON OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IN LOCAL AND COMBINED AUTHORITIES

Camilla de Bernhardt Lane (CfGS) outlined the work of the CfGS in looking at improvements arising from the statutory guidance. The chairman provided opportunity for colleagues to share views on how the statutory guidance (issued May 2019) had let to improvements or changes, particularly with regards to the key areas of culture, resourcing, selecting committee members, power to access information, planning work and evidence sessions.

6. ASK THE NETWORK

Paul Thistlewood (Isle of Wight) raised a question and discussion took place in relation to the approaches being taken with meetings arranged during the national period of mourning or papers due to be sent.

Martin Jenks (East Sussex) raised a question and discussion took place in relation to scrutiny minutes.

7. FUTURE MEETINGS

The last meeting of the year was planned for 2 December 2022. Suggestions for future agenda items were welcomed.

The meeting closed at 12.40pm.