

# County and Unitary Councils' Officer Overview and Scrutiny Network

## Minutes

**MEETING** COUNTY & UNITARY COUNCILS' OFFICER OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY NETWORK

**DATE** FRIDAY 2 DECEMBER 2022, 11.00 AM – 12.50 PM

**VENUE** VIRTUAL (MICROSOFT TEAMS)

**PRESENT** John Cade (Chairman), Paul Thistlewood (Secretary), Megan Tuckwell (Minutes) (Isle of Wight), Chris Angus (Northumberland), Ben Baugh (Herefordshire), Amy Bridgewater-Carnall (Warwickshire), Katherine Bailey (Suffolk), Michael Carr (Herefordshire), Victoria Castree (Coventry City), Andrew Clayton (Milton Keynes), George Dare (Dorset), Sharon Davies (Blackpool), Marco Dias (Oxfordshire), Katie Dover (Buckinghamshire), Karen Dunleavy (Petersborough), Charlie Fisher (Devon), Tom Fowler (Buckinghamshire), Anthony Griggs (Cambridgeshire), Joey Gurney (Bracknell Forest), Kay Goldsmith (Kent), Janet Howard (Newcastle), Gennie Holmes (Coventry), Joanna Holmes (Bristol), Graham Hughes, Theresa Harden (Suffolk), Martin Jenks (East Sussex), Claire Notman (Cumbria), Julia Parks (South Gloucestershire), Mark Pirnie (Southampton), Earl Piggott-Smith (City of Wolverhampton), Ross Pike (Surrey), Esther Prangle (Bracknell Forest), Peter Randall (Norfolk), Susanne Sanger (West Sussex), Zach Simister (Staffordshire), Martin Stevens (City of Wolverhampton), Michael Turner (Medway), Martin Stevens (Wolverhampton), Chris Ward (Buckinghamshire), Danial Webb (Shropshire), Mel White (Isle of Wight), Fred Whitehouse (Devon), Stacey Worthington (Telford & Wrekin)

**GUESTS** Annette Aiken, Camilla de Bernhardt Lane, Ed Hammond, Natalie Rotherham (CfGS)  
Giles Crompton-Howe, Katherine Fiegehen, Rachel Skingle (Department for Health and Social Care)

---

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.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 September 2022 were noted.

3. PROGRESS WITH THE HEALTH AND CARE ACT 2022

Representatives of the Department for Health and Social Care were in attendance to provide an update on the progress with elements of the Act. Colleagues received a presentation and it was agreed that this would be circulated to the Network. Questions were raised regarding the guidance on appointing chief executives and chairmen of ICB's, the measures of success that the changes will be assessed against, the continued role of the health and wellbeing boards, and service reconfigurations, and the role of the IRP.

4. CENTRE FOR GOVERNANCE AND SCRUTINY UPDATE

Ed Hammond (CfGS) provided an update on the Centres activities since the last meeting (including recruitment) and activities planned for 2023. Upcoming publications would include

guidance on the operation of call-in, effective council constitutions, and the operation of full council meetings. Support was ongoing to authorities and regional scrutiny networks.

5. BUDGET, COST OF LIVING CRISIS AND S114 NOTICES

Discussion took place with regards to how scrutiny could ensure that Council finances are effectively looked at, in light of the 2023-24 budget which was forecast to be challenging for all Councils following the pandemic and in response to rising energy costs. It was noted that a number of authorities were looking at issuing a Section 114 notice due to the inability to meet future expenditure requirements.

6. ASK THE NETWORK

Michael Carr (Herefordshire) raised a question in relation to the Schools Bill.

7. SCRUTINY CHRISTMAS LIST

Ideas were shared for the upcoming year:

- Paul Thistlewood (Isle of Wight) - Wider recognition of the role that can be played by scrutiny in the development of council policies, plans and strategies.
- Earl Piggott-Smith (Wolverhampton) - The statutory guidance for councils and combined authorities included in all council constitutions.
- Katherine Bailey (Suffolk) - resolution of so many white papers/gov consultations which are holding everything up- Social Care, Passenger Transport, Flood Risk Management, Education, planning (CIL/S106)
- Gennie Holmes (Coventry) - Committed, informed and knowledgeable Chairs
- Susanne Sanger (West Sussex)- Early involvement in policy development, including budget development, to ensure scrutiny can actually have an influence. Better engagement by all members of a committee, more strategic type questioning rather than getting bogged down in the detail.
- Camilla de Bernhardt Lane (Devon) - Scrutiny has more relevance against the challenges that all Councils face this year.
- Ross Pike (Surrey) - Acceptance that quantity does not equal quality.
- Charlie Fisher (Devon) - After some big and unexpected changes, some stability to the leadership/ officers of the services we look at!

8. FUTURE MEETINGS

The dates for future meetings were 10 March, 30 June, 8 September and 1 December 2023. All will commence at 10.30am and be virtual. Suggestions for future agenda items were welcomed. Consideration was given to the arrangements for the appointment of a new Secretary to the Network as Paul Thistlewood would be retiring at the end of March 2023. Colleagues were invited to consider the opportunity and contact Paul if interest.

The meeting closed at 12.50pm.