

County and Unitary Councils' Officer Overview and Scrutiny Network

Minutes

MEETING	COUNTY & UNITARY COUNCILS' OFFICER OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY NETWORK
DATE	FRIDAY 24 JUNE 2022, 11.00 AM – 12.35 PM
VENUE	VIRTUAL (MICROSOFT TEAMS)
PRESENT	John Cade (Chairman), Paul Thistlewood (Secretary), Megan Tuckwell (Minutes) (Isle of Wight), Katherine Bailey (Suffolk), Simon Bennett (Wiltshire), Camilla de Bernhardt Lane (Devon), Deborah Breedon (Staffordshire), Charlotte Cameron (Peterborough), Michael Carr (Herefordshire), Neil Carr (Wokingham), Victoria Castree (Coventry), Liz Chandler (Norfolk), Karen Christon (Newcastle), George Dare (Dorset), Sharon Davis (Blackpool), Katie Dover (Buckinghamshire), James Edmunds (West Northamptonshire), Simon Evans (Lincolnshire), Tom Fowler (Buckinghamshire), Michaela Green, Theresa Harden (Suffolk), Daniel Harry (North Yorkshire), Jo Heather (Cornwall), Alex Holgate (Hull), Gennie Holmes (Coventry), Janet Howard (Newcastle), Tom Hudson (Oxford), Ross Jago (Plymouth), Clare Kileen (Cumbria), Katherine De La Mora (West Sussex), Gordon Oliver (West Berks), Earl Piggott-Smith (Wolverhampton), Mark Pirnie (Southampton), Peter Randall (Norfolk), Elizabeth Richardson (Milton Keynes), Natalie Rotherham (Hertfordshire), Tracy Rowe (Torbay), Helen Taber-French (Suffolk), Stephen Tautz (Southend), Roslyn Tidman (Milton Keynes), Chris Ward (Bucks), Harvey Winder (East Sussex)
GUESTS	Annette Aiken, Ed Hammond, Megan Ingle (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.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2022 were noted. Feedback was sought with regards to the inclusion of Councillors at the last meeting.

3. HEALTH AND CARE ACT

Ed Hammond provided an update on the latest position with regards to the Health and Care Act. Discussion took place with regards to consultations with health scrutiny, the approach by elected members, health scrutiny joint-committees (and the request to hold these virtually), the roles of ICP boards and health and wellbeing boards, and the importance of committee (and chairman) continuity.

4. ESTABLISHMENT OF A COUNCILLOR NETWORK

The views of colleagues were sought on whether there could be benefit in establishing a similar national network for councillors, following the last meeting where arrangements were made for a small number of councillors to attend for the purpose of speaking on the

Health and Care Bill. It was noted that this may duplicate work already in place at a regional level and it was agreed that ad-hoc webinar events on specific topics would be more beneficial and may see better engagement.

Discussion took place with regards to active regional networks, and it was requested that the CfGS provide a brief overview of the landscape of networks which are held. Victoria Castree presented an update from the recently re-launched West Midlands Scrutiny Network. Going forward there was an intention that other regional networks would report to the national network in a similar way. Comments were made with regards to the coordination of scrutiny at a regional level (such as the effective scrutiny of ambulance services in the West Midlands).

ACTION: CfGS to provide a list of active regional networks.

5. CENTRE FOR GOVERNANCE AND SCRUTINY UPDATE

Ed Hammond provided an update on the Centres activities since the last meeting and activities planned for 2022. It was advised that upcoming publications would include guidance on post-pandemic scrutiny, combined authorities, gambling harms, effective council constitutions, and the operation of call-in.

6. TRAINING FOR SCRUTINY OFFICERS

Discussion took place regarding the current availability of training for scrutiny officers and opportunities for continued development of skills. Comments were made in relation to ADSO and the LGA, and it was noted that a CfGS training offer was being developed and a series of webinars would be arranged.

7. RELATIONSHIPS WITH TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS

Colleagues were invited to share experiences of working relationships between overview and scrutiny and town and parish councils. Comments were made with regards to engagement and co-option to committees.

8. ASK THE NETWORK

Gennie Holmes (Coventry) raised a question in relation to the scrutiny of individual serious case reviews (or similar) to their Children's Services scrutiny committees. It was broadly agreed that this was not common practice and that a focus was on the effectiveness of the safeguarding partnership and not individual cases.

9. FUTURE MEETINGS

Dates for future meetings during the rest of this year were 16 September (moved from 9 September) and 2 December 2022. Work to make the September meeting hybrid was ongoing.

The meeting closed at 12.35pm.