

## **Corporate Scrutiny – Tuesday 10 March 2020** **Written question from Cllr Geoff Brodie to the Chairman**

Now that your Committee has a Conservative Administration majority are you, your Vice Chair and the leader of the Island Independent group not just providing a cloak of respectability to Corporate Scrutiny rather than meaningful and unrewarded challenge?

For example, your Committee now has three Conservative members who are on the Administration's payroll - i.e. Chair of Planning Cllr Quirk, Chair of Audit Cllr Tyndall and Chair of Children's Services Cllr Churchman, as well as the SRA you receive in your 'grace and favour' position.

Would it not have been better if you and the Vice Chair had stood up to the administration over control of your agenda in the previous 2 years of opposition control of the committee, which may just have secured the confidence of all opposition Members?

### ***Response***

We are responding jointly to your question put to us as Chair and Vice-Chair of Corporate Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 10th March 2020 (MQ 06/20).

As you note, members of the Conservative group are now in the majority on the committee rather than there being a majority of opposition members through inverse proportionality. We note that at a vote at Full Council of 26 February 2020 a recommendation was voted upon that would have continued the inverse proportionality arrangements. Our own votes were to retain inverse proportionality. Four members voted against, and as legislation requires no councillor to object to disapplication of proportionality, it is a consequence of any one of those votes that the current proportional arrangements are now in place.

We do not agree with your assertion that we provide 'a cloak of respectability' by remaining as members of the committee. We believe we best serve the requirements of scrutiny and the expectations of residents by remaining as members and engaging constructively in the scrutiny function. The Local Government Association's publication, A Councillor's Workbook on Scrutiny, sets out the importance of scrutiny being seen as impartial and staying separate from party politics. In our time on the committee, we have seen members of all groups – administration and opposition – put challenging questions as part of fulfilling our duty as 'critical friend'. This has been particularly the case in each of the call-ins that have taken place in our time as chair and vice-chair.

You refer to the committee's agenda. The scrutiny function derives from legislation, is subject to statutory guidance. Roles, terms of reference and other matters are set out in the council's constitution. Thereafter, Corporate Scrutiny committee develops its own work plan and consequently has control of its agenda.

We note your reference to a number of members of the committee having roles that come with a special responsibility allowance. To respond would require taking inference and we feel it would not be appropriate to do so. Instead, if you have a question relating to this reference, we invite you to put it clearly.

Whether or not the scrutiny function is being effective will always be a matter of personal opinion. As last year, the committee will be reporting on its work over the 2019/20 municipal cycle at its meeting in early May. The report will provide a basis for all to make a judgement and, perhaps, make recommendations to Full Council on constitutional changes that they feel would improve the scrutiny function.

Cllrs Andrew Garratt - chair of Corporate Scrutiny Committee,

Cllr Michael Lilley – vice chair of Corporate Scrutiny Committee.