Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 28 August 2018

Committee Reporting

Item number	7.14
Report number	
Executive/routine	
Wards	N/A
Council Commitments	-

Executive Summary

On 31 May 2018 the Council agreed a motion by Councillor Doggart exploring the number of reports presented to Council and all committees within the current Council term.

The following report provides the information requested by Council and outlines measures to improve committee reporting including the possible implementation of a committee management system.

Report

Committee Reporting

1. Recommendations

1.1 To note the report and steps being taken to improve the overall committee reporting process.

2. Background

2.1 On 31 May 2018 the Council agreed a motion by Councillor Doggart exploring the number of reports presented to Council and all committees within the current Council term.

2.2 There was also an outstanding Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee remit to outline possible improvements to committee reporting using technology.

3. Main report

3.1 Councillor Doggart's motion asked for five elements to be covered in the report and the report is structured around these questions.

Number of Reports due for Committee

3.2 The number of reports scheduled for August to December 2018 is 227. It is expected that this will increase significantly as the agendas for committees late in the year are finalised.

Number of reports presented to committee/Council on time

3.3 The Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 requires that committee papers are published three clear days before the meeting, not including the day of meeting or day of receipt. The legislation allows reports to be marked 'to follow' on the agenda or be ruled urgent but this should not be routine. The Council tries to avoid 'to follow' or urgent reports but there are times when it is necessary. There were 418 reports following the local government elections in 2017 and 543 in the first six months of 2018, totalling 961.

Number of reports presented late, or not at all, to committee/Council

3.4 Of these 961 reports, 19 were marked 'to follow' on the agenda, resulting in 98% of reports being published on time. This number though is inflated by three referral

reports which were on the agenda as potential items as they had not been referred at the time of publication.

Directorate	Number of to follow reports
Chief Executive (includes 3 referral reports)	5
Communities and Families	2
Health and Social Care Partnership	3
Place	8
Resources	1
Total	**19**

The reasons for the late presenting of reports

3.5   There is no trend in terms of any one directorate or committee being particularly responsible for late reports. Although the Place directorate has the most 'to follow' reports they are also responsible for producing the most reports.

3.6   The Council does not currently collect information on why a report is marked 'to follow' and there are not systems in place to produce significant statistical information on committee reporting. However, the common reason was reports not being finalised in time with the report being submitted to the committee at a later date due to confusion over reporting deadlines or resource pressures. Late reports are sometimes unavoidable due to changing circumstances but improvements can be made to the process to ensure this is not a common occurrence by reducing the manual elements of the process.

Steps the Council will take to ensure no further report deadlines are missed during the current Council

3.7   As noted in June 2018 the number of reports the Council and its committees considers is high compared to other local authorities and has increased in recent years. Also despite the number of committees decreasing, as agreed in June 2017, the number of committee meetings has only experienced a minor reduction.

3.8   It is not possible to ensure no further report deadlines are missed and the legislation allows this flexibility due to it being, on occasion and in certain circumstances, necessary for Councils to make quick decisions. However, despite the high rate of 98% for meeting deadlines, this and in particular the planning of reports can be improved.

3.9   The committee report process has been in place since 2010 and although very effective in ensuring reports are submitted to committee, it is showing signs of strain. The process is very manual, resource intensive and does not produce a

focussed approach to reporting and can result in reports being delayed. A more efficient process would allow greater transparency and engagement with the community as well as reducing staff time on reporting and facilitating more joined up planning and oversight. To achieve this the following is being implemented:

3.9.1 Replacing executive committee key decision forward plans with work programme;

3.9.2 Reviewing the report template and guidance

3.9.3 Exploring new software to replace reporting processes.

Work Programmes

3.10 On 28 June 2018 the Council agreed that executive committee key decision forward plans should be replaced by work programmes. This would mean a more comprehensive list of reports being outlined for future meetings. These work programmes are only a guide and are subject to change but once allied with a new report process will be able to provide greater transparency and an ability to manage their business more effectively.

Report template and guidance

3.11 On 28 June 2018 the Council agreed that the Chief Executive should review the report template and guidance with an aim of reducing reports but maintaining sufficient financial, risk and statutory information whilst increasing the accessibility of the document. The Chief Executive will be consulting with elected members on a template before submitting a proposal to committee.

New Committee Management and Report Process

3.12 The existing system is limited in that it provides no additional functionality beyond publishing capability and has no ability to integrate with a range of key business processes, e.g. webcasting, document management, elected member compliance, report tracking and Council Diary. The report search function is not fit for purpose and the Committee paper subscription service has been disabled as it is not compliant with data protection legislation. As stated previously report management is manually carried out, is inefficient and inhibits work planning.

3.13 In the time period since the current system was implemented, committee management software has been developed to a level where real efficiencies can be achieved.

3.13.1 **Report Workflow** - Moving from manual to automated report workflow allows the drafting and approvals process to be mapped, for bottlenecks to be identified. It ensures deadlines are clearly communicated to report authors, with deadline reminders by email and for the process to be monitored by directorates and Committee Services staff. A report management system provides a complete overview, inbuilt forward planning and the advanced identification of duplication or issues; resulting in operational efficiencies and improved transparency.

3.13.2 **Committee Management** - The Committee work programme functionality automates many of the Committee administrative duties and planning processes within the system, improving efficiency and effectiveness in completing tasks and eliminating delays, duplication of effort and cumbersome manual techniques. For example, documents and forms can be standardised, therefore, the entire process becomes faster and more precise.

3.13.3 **Meetings** - A unique profile can be created for each elected member and senior officer allowing papers to be pushed to Committee members based on their profile and privileges, taking into account private and custom circulations where required. This will automate the summons and paper circulation process and mean that papers won't need to be re-circulated when updated as notification is automated within the user application.

3.13.4 **Management Information** – Committee management systems allow statistical information to be easily produced. The information is linked to on-line forward plans, agenda items, minutes and decisions across meetings and Committees, accelerating the retrieval of accurate and relevant information to allow further actions to be taken.

3.13.5 **Efficient Workflows -** Manually-intensive steps can be automated, reducing risks related to errors and delays associated with the current manual systems. Reports are written through the software, providing version control and with email reminders for staff involved. Dissemination of Committee decisions and actions is automated through the system. This can be managed by directorates giving them greater control.

3.13.6 **Other efficiencies –** Other efficiencies such as integration with webcasting, automatic diary production, electronic entry for Register of Interests are common in committee management products.

3.14 The Council's requirements are currently being explored through a procurement exercise to identify the most appropriate product. It is hoped that the software can be identified and implemented by April 2019.

4. Measures of success

4.1 Improved reports submitted to committee within required timescales.

5. Financial impact

5.1 Committee Management System scoping costs have been contained within relevant service area budgets.

5.2 Due to the ongoing procurement process it is not yet possible to confirm capital or revenue costs.

6. Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

6.1 Measures proposed ensure that the Council's decision making is based on informative and thorough reporting that meets the Council's statutory duties whilst ensuring that the process is efficient and streamlined.

7. Equalities impact

7.1 There are no direct equalities impacts as a result of this report.

8. Sustainability impact

8.1 There is no direct sustainability impact as a result of this report.

9. Consultation and engagement

9.1 Workstreams highlighted in this report will require input from elected members and individual service areas at design and implementation stage. A range of measures including email surveys and workshops will be scheduled as appropriate.

10. Background reading/external references

10.1 Committee Report Process – Report by the Chief Executive to GRBV Committee – 19/10/2015

10.2 Reports Presented to Council and Committees – Motion by Councillor Doggart – 31/05/18

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11. Appendices

Statistics presented to Council in June 2018

Appendix

Total Number of Reports

Total number of reports	2015	2016	2017	2018
Edinburgh	970	859	653	460 (543 with locality committees) (first six months)
Aberdeen	500- 650	607	442	n/a
Dundee	500 -650	417	447	n/a
Glasgow	682	596 (875) if area partnerships included)	465 (777) if area partnerships included)	n/a

Report Number by Committee

Name of Committee	2016 (first 6 months)	2016 (last 6 months)	2017(first 6 months)	2017 (last 6 months)	2018 (first 6 months)
City of Edinburgh Council	37	21	51	24	38
Communities and Neighbourhoods Committee (pre May 2017)	7	10	10		
Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee	40	31	56	32	31
Culture and Communities Committee (post May 2017)				24	38
Culture and Sport (pre May 2017)	11	29	10		
Economy Committee (pre May 2017)	32	15	15		
Education, Children and Families Committee	38	30	13	42	42

Finance and Resources Committee	140	116	68	91	103
Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee	41	42	25	39	29
Housing and Economy Committee (post May 2017)	N/A	N/A	31	31	35
Health, Social Care and Housing Committee (pre May 2017)	36	22	17		
Integration Joint Board			31	41	35
Planning Committee	15	21	18	17	12
Regulatory Committee	13	16	8	11	18
Transport and Environment Committee	57	39	44	46	42