

# Policy and Sustainability Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 6 August 2020

## Review of Political Management Arrangements 2020

Executive/routine  
Wards  
Council Commitments

### 1. Recommendations

---

- 1.1 Agree that the Policy and Sustainability Committee would meet monthly between September and December 2020 and its remit would revert back to pre-Covid 19 on 1 September 2020 but with the addition of decision making and scrutiny of the Adaptation and Renewal Programme.
- 1.2 Agree that the Finance and Resources Committee and all other committees (as set out in Committee Terms of Reference and Delegated Functions) except for the executive committees could meet from 7 August 2020.
- 1.3 Agree that all other executive committees could meet from 1 September 2020.
- 1.4 Agree that the Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee remit would revert to pre-Covid 19 on 1 September 2020.
- 1.5 Agree to delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Regulatory Committee Convener, Vice-Convener and group spokespersons, to agree an appropriate and safe time to reinstate the Licensing Sub-Committee.
- 1.6 Agree that meetings would be held virtually until 31 December 2020 and the situation would be reviewed alongside the political management arrangements in December 2020.
- 1.7 Note that a revised interim Procedural Standing Orders would be presented to Council in August 2020.

**Andrew Kerr**

Chief Executive

Contact: Gavin King, Democracy, Governance and Resilience Senior Manager

E-mail: [gavin.king@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:gavin.king@edinburgh.gov.uk) | Tel: 0131 529 4239



# Report

## Review of Political Management Arrangements 2020

### 2. Executive Summary

---

- 2.1 This report sets out political management arrangements to carry out Council business for the period until 31 December 2020.

### 3. Background

---

- 3.1 In response to the Covid-19 emergency; specifically, to establish quick and agile decision making, manage the pressure on staff, and prioritise frontline services; interim political management arrangements were implemented.
- 3.2 The Leadership Advisory Panel (LAP) on 23 April 2020 agreed that the political management arrangements should be reviewed by the Policy and Sustainability Committee in August 2020.

### 4. Main report

---

- 4.1 In determining the Council's interim political management arrangements for the period 1 May -1 September, the following requirements and considerations were taken into account:
- The constraints and demands of the emergency situation;
  - The requirement to consider strategic and/or non-urgent business;
  - The need for increased political oversight and scrutiny;
  - The constraints of the current interim arrangements.
- 4.2 These factors remain relevant when considering the Council's political management arrangements going forward.

#### **The constraints of the emergency situation**

- 4.3 The Council has been in an emergency situation over the past 4 months, Council resources have been stretched and continue to be under pressure as the Council and the City recover. Undoubtedly, the situation has developed into a new phase and there is increased officer capacity and need to make more decisions than in the past four months. However, the Council remains in an emergency situation and is also heavily involved in planning and preparation for future waves or localised spikes in Covid-19. The balance between increased oversight and scrutiny and

when supporting this leads to a negative impact on operations must still be considered.

### **The requirement to consider strategic and/or non-urgent business**

- 4.4 Council business has been focussed initially on the response of the emergency situation and then on the requirement to adjust services to meet the demands and the easing of restrictions. However, consideration must be taken to the next phase including the continued recovery, adaption and renewal. The Council is currently considering the impact of the emergency on its budget and its priorities moving forward and it must ensure that adequate elected member decision making and scrutiny arrangements are in place for both strategic and non-urgent business.

### **The need for increased political oversight and scrutiny and constraints of the current arrangements.**

- 4.5 From 1 May 2020, the Policy and Sustainability Committee has had an increased remit and has been an effective method of decision making over this period. The Council has benefited from the Covid-19 response being considered by one committee, ensuring there is a joined up strategic approach to a complex situation with wide-ranging issues and requirements. As the Council scales up its activities, the burden on one committee has increased and it is not envisaged that this is a sustainable long-term solution.
- 4.6 Further, the Council had to operate with minimal scrutiny of decision making during the initial phase of the emergency. The capacity to support the full committee system was not possible. The reintroduction of the Governance, Risk and Best Value (GRBV) Committee in June with a limited remit returned some further political oversight and scrutiny, however without appropriate, fully developed scrutiny and supporting arrangements this model of decision making is not a sustainable approach. Reintroducing a greater level of political oversight and scrutiny is preferable for democratic and good governance reasons.

### **Virtual Meetings**

- 4.7 Public health guidance remains that non-essential office working should take place at home if possible. As a result, committee meetings have been taking place virtually and it is likely that with social distancing rules in place, they will need to continue into the short-term. Virtual committee meetings have been successful though and consequently has been less of a constraint than would have previously been expected.
- 4.8 Following the Review of Political Management Arrangements in 2019 where the remits of executive committees were amended to create a more equal committee workload, analysis has demonstrated that these changes were effective with average committee times either stabilising or reducing (detailed statistics attached at Appendix 1). However, based on analysis of the number of reports and time spent in committee considering reports March-June 2020, this trend has not continued. The Policy and Sustainability Committee has experienced lengthy meetings during this period of on average just under 6 hours which is double the average length when compared to August 2019-February 2020. GRBV has met

twice and has seen the time spent considering each report change from an average of 16 minutes (August 2019-February 2020) to 37 minutes (June-July 2020). The changes in committee remits can partly account for this but it is clear virtual meetings do take significantly longer.

### **Next Phase**

- 4.9 As outlined above there is a requirement to increase the number of committees due to greater levels of decision-making and a need for increased political oversight and scrutiny. There remain constraints with the capacity of officers and the emergency situation continues to mean some adjustments are desirable to ensure a coherent strategic approach. Consideration of a second wave should also be kept in mind in determining the next steps and that a phased reduction may need to be taken if the public health situation changes.
- 4.10 It is recommended that a phased return to committee meetings takes place and that all formal meetings of the Council, including Council, executive committees and other committees should take place virtually using MS Teams until December 2020, taking into account public health guidance.

### **Executive Committees**

- 4.11 It is recommended that the Policy and Sustainability Committee meets on a monthly basis from 1 September 2020 and returns to its original remit, except that it should remain as the decision-making committee for the Adaptation and Renewal Programme. This will ensure that the Council continues to take a cross-service approach to transformation and a consistent strategic planning approach.
- 4.12 As indicated at a previous Policy and Sustainability Committee, the Finance and Resources Committee should be the next executive committee to recommence and this will be able to meet from 7 August 2020.
- 4.13 All other executive committees would be reinstated from 1 September 2020 with the remit that was in place before the Covid-19 emergency.
- 4.14 Due to the continuing pressure on staffing, business should be kept to a manageable level and focus on key services, but this could be expanded as the situation develops and resource pressures lessen. It is not envisaged that officers could resource the pre-Covid-19 level of business in the current situation, especially with the added time pressures virtual meetings bring. In addition, there is the possibility that overly long meetings could impact on the quality of decision making. It will be the responsibility of Executive Directors to work with the respective Conveners and Vice-Conveners to ensure agendas are of a manageable length. Conveners should also endeavour to keep business to around three hours to manage the pressure on resources for both elected members and officers but acknowledging that this may not always be possible. The statistics appended to this report provide a breakdown of committee business including average time of executive committee meetings and provide a helpful aid to support the management of time.

- 4.15 To further manage time pressures, and after a successful pilot with GRBV, a MS Teams channel will be set up for each executive committee. The purpose of the channel is to share information with elected members outside formal committee meetings.
- 4.16 Positive feedback has been received in relation to written deputations therefore this approach will remain in place. This will also support the management of committee time.
- 4.17 As part of this phase, Agenda Planning Meetings (APMs) would be reinstated for executive committees. As agreed by Group Leaders, APMs will be a planning meeting for the upcoming committee and should not replicate debate or discussion that would usually take place at the meeting. In normal circumstances the meeting should last no longer than 30 minutes and its primary aim will be as follows:
- 4.17.1 agree the running order of agenda items for the upcoming meeting;
  - 4.17.2 agree whether further information is required;
  - 4.17.3 agree which officers should be requested to speak to the agenda items;
  - 4.17.4 agree if there should be any external invitees.
- 4.18 The Convener, Vice-Convener and Clerk and a representative from each of the appropriate service areas will attend. A member from each political group may also attend. Papers will be circulated to all members of the committee for information. Officer attendance should be kept to a minimum.
- 4.19 The scheduling of committee meetings from 1 September 2020 would return to those dates agreed by Council in February 2020 when approving the Council Diary 2020/21.

### **Other Committees**

- 4.20 Other committees (as set out in Committee Terms of Reference and Delegated Functions) would start to meet over this period as business need required. A number of other committees need to meet immediately to address current business including Planning Committee, Personnel Appeals Committee, Committee on the Jean F Watson Bequest and Community Council Independent Complaints Panel. As noted above, due to the continuing pressure on staffing, business would have to be kept to a manageable level and committees should not meet unless required business is time sensitive, but this could be expanded as the situation develops and resource pressures lessen.
- 4.21 The GRBV Committee's remit would return to the remit that was in place before the Covid-19 emergency.

### **Licensing Sub-Committee**

- 4.22 There are specific issues that require to be considered before reinstating the Licensing Sub-Committee specifically, in relation to the number of external participants that would require to participate in meetings to satisfy the legal requirements upon the council. Additionally, the staff within the Place directorate who would support the normal function of this committee remain heavily committed

in dealing with the current situation and it would be difficult to resource the level of business that the committee dealt with prior to lockdown. It is recommended that delegated authority is given to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Convener, Vice-Convener and group spokespersons, to assess when it is an appropriate and safe time to reinstate the sub- committee and whether some measures need to remain in place to manage the level of business. It is anticipated that this committee would not resume a normal schedule of meetings before 1 October 2020 in order to allow these issues to be addressed however there may be one or two trial committee meetings before then to test the necessary arrangements.

### **Standing Orders**

- 4.23 A new set of interim Standing Orders are being developed. They are broadly the same as the pre Covid-19 Standing Orders with minor changes to reflect that the meetings are virtual.
- 4.24 A new Standing Order is also proposed that would limit reports to be only considered by one executive committee. If reports are of interest for another committee then these could be sent for information to elected members. The aim of this Standing Order is to reduce repetition and to help clarify the accountable committee for decision-making. GRBV Committee is not an executive committee so reports could continue to be considered by an executive committee and then the GRBV Committee.

### **Working Groups**

- 4.25 Working groups remain a popular vehicle for policy development and wider discussion with partners and stakeholders. The Council currently has 34 working groups that vary from, short life working groups and long-standing groups such as the Joint Consultative Group. A very small number of working groups have met during the Covid-19 emergency period to discuss immediate matters but working groups in general exerts pressure on both officer and elected member time and resource.
- 4.26 Given the impact of the Covid-19 emergency and resource pressures that remain, it is recommended that working groups only meet during this period if:
- there is officer capacity and resource available;
  - it is required for specific actions to progress;
  - they take place virtually.
- 4.27 The number and nature of working groups, including proposals around the use of working groups going forward will be considered as part of the review of political management arrangements in December 2020. It is also recommended that Champions are included in this report and roles and responsibilities going forward.

## **5. Next Steps**

---

- 5.1 If approved, arrangements would be put in place to reinstate committees as set out within this report.

## **6. Financial impact**

---

- 6.1 Political management arrangements over this period would be contained within existing revenue budgets.

## **7. Stakeholder/Community Impact**

---

- 7.1 The governance arrangements of the Council require to be robust to provide adequate assurance on its delivery of services. This is heightened by an emergency, but it is imperative that a balance is struck so that an overly resource intensive governance structure does not impact negatively on service delivery.

## **8. Background reading/external references**

---

- 8.1 [Review of Political Management Arrangements 2019 – City of Edinburgh Council of 30 May 2019](#)
- 8.2 [Interim Political Management Arrangements 2020 – Leadership Advisory Panel of 23 April 2020](#)
- 8.3 [Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee Arrangements and Remote Council Meetings – Policy and Sustainability Committee of 28 May 2020](#)

## **9. Appendices**

---

- 9.1 Statistical Analysis of political management arrangements

## Appendix 1

### Policy and Sustainability and Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee Comparison Statistics January 2019 - July 2020

January 2019 - June 2019	GRBV	P&S	August 2019 - Dec 2019	GRBV	P&S
Avg Number of Reports	9.6	17	Avg Number of Reports	10	12.75
Avg Total Length of Reports	309.2	240.5	Avg Total Length of Reports	277	196.75
Avg Length	02:53:10	02:27:41	Avg Length	02:44:36	02:51:53

January – February 2020	GRBV	P&S	March 2020 - July 2020	GRBV	P&S
Avg Number of Reports	7	12	Avg Number of Reports	5.5	12.6
Avg Total Length of Reports	175	202	Avg Total Length of Reports	143.5	164.2
Avg Length	01:49:48	03:36:03	Avg Length	03:03:40	05:55:09

### Executive Committee Average Length January 2019 – February 2020

January 2019 - June 2019	Average Length	August 2019 - March 2020	Average Length	January 2020 - February 2020	Average Length
City of Edinburgh Council	05:49:55	City of Edinburgh Council	04:59:00	City of Edinburgh Council	04:03:36
Culture and Communities Committee	02:21:33	Culture and Communities Committee	03:54:39	Culture and Communities Committee	03:07:37
Education, Children and Families Committee	02:01:17	Education, Children and Families Committee	03:29:48	-	-
Finance and Resources Committee	04:42:30	Finance and Resources Committee	02:39:12	Finance and Resources Committee	01:52:18
Housing & Economy Committee	03:36:57	Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee	02:03:06	Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee	01:47:09
Corporate, Policy and Strategy Committee	02:27:41	Policy and Sustainability Committee	02:51:53	Policy and Sustainability Committee	03:36:03



Transport and Environment Committee	05:27:37	Transport and Environment Committee	04:41:08	Transport and Environment Committee	04:31:02
Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee	02:53:10	Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee	02:44:36	Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee	01:49:48

**Executive Committee Reports Comparison August 2019 - February 2020**

August 2019 - March 2020	Reports		January 2020 - February 2020	Reports	
<b>Policy and Sustainability Committee</b>			<b>Policy and Sustainability Committee</b>		
Develop and approve Council policies, including reform, community planning and partnership working;	16	31.37%	Develop and approve Council policies, including reform, community planning and partnership working;	2	8.33%
Planning, implementing, reporting and reviewing Council service delivery	18	35.29%	Planning, implementing, reporting and reviewing Council service delivery	10	41.67%
Best value	0	0.00%	Best value	0	0.00%
Diversity and equalities	3	5.88%	Diversity and equalities	1	4.17%
Monitor implementation of the Council's business and service development plans, corporate strategies, change programmes, corporate initiatives and service reviews	3	5.88%	Monitor implementation of the Council's business and service development plans, corporate strategies, change programmes, corporate initiatives and service reviews	1	4.17%
Advise, agree, scrutinise and review Edinburgh Police and Fire and Rescue Service city-wide plans and performance	2	3.92%	Advise, agree, scrutinise and review Edinburgh Police and Fire and Rescue Service city-wide plans and performance	2	8.33%
Sustainability, carbon reduction and energy issues	6	11.76%	Sustainability, carbon reduction and energy issues	4	16.67%
Public participation and empowerment	0	0.00%	Public participation and empowerment	1	4.17%
Governance & Revenue	3	5.88%	Governance & Revenue	3	12.50%
	<b>51</b>	<b>100%</b>		<b>24</b>	<b>100%</b>

August 2019 - March 2020	Reports		January 2020 - February 2020	Reports	
<b>Culture and Communities Committee</b>			<b>Culture and Communities Committee</b>		
Community Justice	1	5.88%	Community Justice	1	12.50%
Community safety	1	5.88%	Community safety	0	0.00%
Health except those matters delegated to another committee or the Integration Joint Board	0	0.00%	Health except those matters delegated to another committee or the Integration Joint Board	0	0.00%
Cultural development, festivals and events	5	29.41%	Cultural development, festivals and events	3	37.50%
Sport and Recreation	4	23.53%	Sport and Recreation	0	0.00%

Arts and museums	2	11.76%	Arts and museums	0	0.00%
Community and locality planning	0	0.00%	Community and locality planning	3	37.50%
Community empowerment	0	0.00%	Community empowerment	0	0.00%
Neighbourhood Partnerships and Community Councils	2	11.76%	Neighbourhood Partnerships and Community Councils	0	0.00%
Governance & Revenue	2	11.76%	Governance & Revenue	1	12.50%
	<b>17</b>	<b>100%</b>		<b>8</b>	<b>100%</b>

August 2019 - March 2020	Reports		January 2020 - February 2020	Reports	
<b>Education, Children and Families Committee</b>			<b>Education, Children and Families Committee</b>		
Council's education, children and families services	29	63.04%	Council's education, children and families services	7	63.64%
Lifelong Learning and Libraries	6	13.04%	Lifelong Learning and Libraries	2	18.18%
Major capital programmes or projects implementation, asset planning and facilities management for the Council's education, children and families services	4	8.70%	Major capital programmes or projects implementation, asset planning and facilities management for the Council's education, children and families services	0	0.00%
Governance & Revenue	7	15.22%	Governance & Revenue	2	18.18%
	<b>46</b>	<b>100%</b>		<b>11</b>	<b>100%</b>

August 2019 - March 2020	Reports		January 2020 - February 2020	Reports	
<b>Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee</b>			<b>Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee</b>		
Housing	2	9.09%	Housing	4	25.00%
Homelessness and housing support	6	27.27%	Homelessness and housing support	2	12.50%
Economic Development	1	4.55%	Economic Development	2	12.50%
External relations and inward investment	6	27.27%	External relations and inward investment	4	25.00%
Inclusive growth	1	4.55%	Inclusive growth	1	6.25%
Governance & Revenue	6	27.27%	Governance & Revenue	3	18.75%
	<b>22</b>	<b>100%</b>		<b>16</b>	<b>100%</b>

August 2019 - March 2020	Reports		January 2020 - February 2020	Reports	
<b>Transport and Environment Committee</b>			<b>Transport and Environment Committee</b>		
Strategic Transport Planning	7	23.33%	Strategic Transport Planning	2	12.50%
Traffic management, roads and parking	6	20.00%	Traffic management, roads and parking	2	12.50%
Public transport	0	0.00%	Public transport	1	6.25%
Public Realm Projects	1	3.33%	Public Realm Projects	1	6.25%

Sustainability, carbon reduction and energy issues	3	10.00%	Sustainability, carbon reduction and energy issues	5	31.25%
Flood Prevention	0	0.00%	Flood Prevention	1	6.25%
Waste services	5	16.67%	Waste services	2	12.50%
Environmental health and trading standards	1	3.33%	Environmental health and trading standards	0	0.00%
Parks and green space	0	0.00%	Parks and green space	1	6.25%
Street cleaning and open space maintenance	0	0.00%	Street cleaning and open space maintenance	0	0.00%
Governance & Revenue	7	23.33%	Governance & Revenue	1	6.25%
	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>		<b>16</b>	<b>100%</b>

August 2019 - March 2020	Reports		January 2020 - February 2020	Reports	
<b>Finance and Resources Committee</b>			<b>Finance and Resources Committee</b>		
Council's revenue and capital budgets	21	26.58%	Council's revenue and capital budgets	8	16.67%
Council's expenditure and budget policy	1	1.27%	Council's expenditure and budget policy	4	8.33%
Monitoring the Council's Treasury Management policies and practices	1	1.27%	Monitoring the Council's Treasury Management policies and practices	0	0.00%
Council's long term financial plan	4	5.06%	Council's long term financial plan	5	10.42%
Procurement and contracts	21	26.58%	Procurement and contracts	12	25.00%
Monitoring of Council debt and debt recovery	2	2.53%	Monitoring of Council debt and debt recovery	2	4.17%
Common Good Fund	1	1.27%	Common Good Fund		0.00%
Human resources	5	6.33%	Human resources	3	6.25%
Disposal and development of Council owned property and land transactions	15	18.99%	Disposal and development of Council owned property and land transactions	12	25.00%
All charitable and other trust funds vested in the Council except where the Council has expressly made other arrangements	1	1.27%	All charitable and other trust funds vested in the Council except where the Council has expressly made other arrangements	0	0.00%
Governance & Revenue	7	8.86%	Governance & Revenue	2	4.17%
	<b>79</b>	<b>100%</b>		<b>48</b>	<b>100%</b>
Lease	14		Lease	5	

**Referral Report Statistics 2019/20**

<b>Committee that report was referred to</b>	<b>Number of Referral Reports Received</b>
City of Edinburgh Council	35
Corporate Policy & Strategy	2
Culture & Communities	5
Education Children & Families	2
Finance & Resources	3
Housing & Economy	4
Housing Homelessness & Fair Work	2
Policy & Sustainability	2
Transport & Environment	6
Total	61

### Local Authority Report Level Comparison

Total number of reports	2015	2016	2017	2018 (first 6 months)	2018 (last 6 months)	2019 (first 6 months)	2019 (last 6 months)
Edinburgh	970	859	653	460 (543 with locality committees)	421 (523 with locality committees)	369	368
Aberdeen	500-650	607	442	n/a	n/a	394	
Dundee	500 - 650	417	447	n/a	n/a	375	
Glasgow	682	596 (875) if area partnerships included)	465 (777) if area partnerships included)	n/a	n/a	652 (excluding area partnerships)	