

Culture and Communities Committee

10.00am, Thursday 26 April 2022

Review of Effectiveness of Scrutiny of the Culture and Communities Committee – Self-Evaluation and Lessons Learnt

1. Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 1.1 Note the outputs from self-evaluation workshop undertaken by the Culture and Communities Committee members on 1 March 2022 to assess current political management arrangements, committee effectiveness and lessons learnt from this Council term.
- 1.2 Note the outputs from the self-evaluation workshop will be used to inform the design of political management arrangement proposals and support provided to elected members around the local government election 2022 and following council term.

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Review of Effectiveness of Scrutiny of the Culture and Communities Committee – Self-Evaluation and Lessons Learnt

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report provides a summary of a self-evaluation workshop undertaken by Culture and Communities Committee (CC) members on 1 March 2022 to assess current political management arrangements (PMAs), committee effectiveness and lessons learnt from this Council term.

3. Background

- 3.1 As part of the Council's preparations for the May 2022 Local Government election, the Corporate Governance Team is conducting a review of the Council's PMAs. A key part of this review is the evaluation of current arrangements. Facilitated self-evaluation sessions by committee members was scheduled with all executive committees before the election and used to inform the design of proposed post-election PMAs and the support provided to councillors for the 2022-2027 term.

4. Main report

- 4.1 All CC members were invited to attend a workshop on 1 March 2022. Only three members of the committee were able to attend with a further member experiencing technical issues which prevented participation. Further members who wish to share their experience and views are encouraged to contact the Corporate Governance Team directly. The workshop evaluated current PMAs relevant to the CC Committee followed by an evaluation of effectiveness in key areas of responsibility.

Political Management Arrangement Assessment

- 4.2 Workshop attendees evaluated six key PMA areas against the scoring criteria set out in figure 1.1 below. The six key areas were: terms of reference, remit and purpose of committee; balance of reporting; number of reports and time spent on each report/meeting frequency; composition of committee and number of committee members; ALEOs, and training.

5	PMA's work well in this area and there is no need for change.
4	PMA's are working well but there are small changes that could be made to improve effectiveness.
3	PMA's are sufficient but there is improvement required.
2	PMA's provide some value but significant improvement is required.
1	PMA's are not effective in their purpose/there is a need for complete redesign.

4.3 Terms of Reference (TORs), Remit and Purpose of Committee - the score agreed by members in this section was **3/4**.

4.4 Elected members were asked the following questions:

4.4.1 Are the Committee's TORs appropriate?

4.4.2 Is there anything that you think should sit elsewhere/currently sits elsewhere and would work well as part of the Committee's remit?

4.4.3 Are you clear on the overall purpose of the Committee?

4.5 Points made during discussion included:

4.5.1 The Committee works well and the TORs are, for the most part, clear.

4.5.2 TORs had some minor grey areas during the term such as the removal and then return of greenspaces to the CC remit.

4.5.3 There was scope for improvement. For example, the remit of CC could be expanded to reduce the agendas of other committees, specifically the tourism remit could sit with CC.

4.5.4 The straddling of issues or responsibility for ALEOs across several committees, and TORs, could make determining overall responsibility unclear on occasion. There was agreement that this had the potential for clarification in the TORs.

4.5.5 A concern was raised that new Councillors may not be fully aware of the remits of all Council committees and that consequently issues within the remit of this committee's TORs may not be fully addressed due to potential confusion created by overlaps in remit.

4.6 Balance of Reporting - the score agreed by members in this section was **3/4**.

4.7 Elected members were asked the following questions:

4.7.1 Are you happy with the balance of reporting?

4.7.2 Is there anything that you'd like to see more/less dedicated reports on?

4.8 Points made during discussion included:

4.8.1 Agreement that the committee's business bulletin is very good and reduces the number of reports that the committee receives.

- 4.8.2 It was noted that culture reports were very good but dominant in the balance of reports the committee received. There was agreement that there was a clear potential to increase the reports regarding sport and communities coming before the committee.
- 4.8.3 Referral reports were often significantly large in content when only for noting and could be included in the business bulletin. Alternatively, where required actions by CC should be made clear in the relevant information at the start of the report. This would reduce unnecessary workload for the committee members.
- 4.8.4 Finance reports tended to be challenging and could contain more context to make them more relevant for members.
- 4.9 Number of reports and time spent on each report/meeting frequency - the score agreed by members in this section was **4/5**.
- 4.10 Elected members were asked the following questions:
- 4.10.1 Do you feel the committee spends an appropriate amount of time on each report?
- 4.10.2 Are 8 weekly meetings appropriate?
- 4.11 Points made during discussion included:
- 4.11.1 Committee has the capacity to spend an appropriate amount of time on each report
- 4.11.2 That the standard 8 weekly meeting cycle was appropriate for the committee.
- 4.12 Composition of Committee and Number of Committee Members - the score agreed by members in this section was **4**.
- 4.13 Elected members were asked the following question:
- 4.13.1 Does the composition of the committee allow it to fulfil its purpose?
- 4.14 Points made during discussion included:
- 4.14.1 Eleven members kept debate focused and the committee have the opportunity to refer to Council if further scrutiny was required. It was agreed increasing the size of the committee would make it unwieldy.
- 4.14.2 Noting that no independent members were represented on the committee.
- 4.14.3 The committee had worked very collaboratively over the political term. There was scope to further engage with the political I group's spokespeople to allow for further and greater sharing of information across all political groups.
- 4.15 ALEOs – the score agreed by members in this section was **3**.
- 4.16 Elected members were asked:
- 4.16.1 Assess the Committee's ALEOs role in regard to assurance, scrutiny and support of service delivery.
- 4.17 Points made during discussion included:

4.17.1 Responsibility for Edinburgh Leisure was spread across three committees (Education, Children and Families, Policy and Sustainability and CC) and there was potential for improving clarity as to where responsibility rests.

4.17.2 It was noted there were different approaches taken by political groups regarding Councillors sitting on both ALEO Boards and parent committees. This resulted in significant information not necessarily being known by all committee members and there was a need to address how this information could be shared.

4.17.3 Training for members on ALEOs needed much improvement – Councillors responsibilities of sitting on an outside company or organisation were not fully understood by all.

4.18 Training – the score agreed by members in this section was **2/3**.

4.19 Elected members were asked:

4.19.1 Would you benefit from specific training or briefing to assist your work on this committee?

4.19.2 How would this best be delivered?

4.20 Points made during discussion included:

4.20.1 Induction training should be spread over a longer period (than 8 weeks), as it was overwhelming. Specific training on relevant issues, policy challenges, and legislative updates throughout would be welcome.

4.20.2 . The format, accessibility and ongoing delivery of training sessions should be reviewed to find an improved way of delivering the content and ensuring the Councillors gained the maximum benefit.

4.20.3 The model of Planning Committee training was praised for providing mock committee sessions, allowing new Councillors to get a better understanding of the functioning of the committee through participation.

Conclusion

4.21 Attendees raised extensive feedback throughout the workshop which was noted by officers leading on the preparations for Council 2022. Outputs would inform the design of PMA options, guidance and training.

4.22 Members felt the volume of reports were balanced and allowed thorough scrutiny of the items presented. Members suggested that there is an opportunity to redistribute elements of other committees to provide clarity of responsibility, for example, moving responsibility for Tourism to CC Committee.

4.23 Members specifically noted that the Committee would benefit from different forms of training throughout the term.

4.24 The attendees thanked the Council officers who had supported and attended the committee for the quality of their reports and commitment to improving the process.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Equivalent self-evaluation workshops will be held with all executive committees. The outputs from these session alongside findings from an elected member survey and exit interviews with those members standing down will inform the design of PMA proposals, guidance and training for elected members following the 2022 election.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 Political management arrangements and elected member training during this period will be contained within existing revenue budgets.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 The outputs of this session will be shared with CC Committee members in advance of consideration at the final Committee.

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 [Review of the Effectiveness of Scrutiny of Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee – self-evaluation and lessons learnt](#) – Governance Risk and Best Value Committee, 18 January 2022