

# Finance and Resources Committee

10.00am, Thursday 3 March 2022

## Review of Effectiveness of Scrutiny of the Finance and Resources Committee – Self-Evaluation and Lessons Learnt

### 1. Recommendations

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The Committee is recommended to:

- 1.1 Note the outputs from self-evaluation workshop undertaken by the Finance and Resources Committee members on 8 February 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.

**Richard Carr**

Interim Executive Director of Corporate Services

Contact: Hayley Barnett, Corporate Governance Manager

Legal and Assurance Division, Corporate Services Directorate

E-mail: [Hayley.barnett@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:Hayley.barnett@edinburgh.gov.uk) | Tel: 0131 529 3996

# Report

## Review of Effectiveness of Scrutiny of the Finance and Resources Committee – Self-Evaluation and Lessons Learnt

### 2. Executive Summary

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- 2.1 This report provides a summary of a self-evaluation workshop undertaken by Finance and Resources Committee (F&R) members on 8 February 2022 to assess current political management arrangements (PMAs), committee effectiveness and lessons learnt from this Council term.

### 3. Background

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- 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 with committee members were scheduled with all executive committees in February/March 2022 and will be used to inform the design of proposed post-election PMAs and the support provided to councillors for the 2022-2027 term.

### 4. Main report

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- 4.1 All F&R members were invited to attend a workshop on 8 February 2022. The workshop evaluated current PMAs relevant to the F&R Committee followed by an evaluation of effectiveness in key areas.

#### **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.

Figure 1.1 – Scoring Criteria	
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 **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 TORs are clear and the remit is appropriate.

4.5.2 The suggestion for a short life working group to look at the oversight of Council Trusts, it was felt the Committee had insufficient time to scrutinise these fully and that this responsibility would be better delegated to a sub-committee.

4.6 Balance of Reporting - the score agreed by members in this section was **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 The committee considers a large volume of business, including standard items throughout the year, but the overall balance of reporting is appropriate.

4.8.2 Briefings ahead of complex leases and property decisions would be helpful. Officers currently brief members ahead of detailed finance reports, this approach is appreciated.

4.9 Number of reports and time spent on each report/meeting frequency - the score agreed by members in this section was **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 The committee were satisfied they had adequate time to consider reports and ask questions.
- 4.11.2 Standard 8-week frequency was appropriate but members requested that other committee meetings with significant agendas (such as Planning Committee and F&R) were not on the same week.
- 4.11.3 Reports are well written and clear but often lengthy. Links to further information should be used where possible and these should link specifically to the appropriate information.
- 4.12 Composition of Committee and Number of Committee Members - the score agreed by members in this section was **5**.
- 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 was appropriate for decision-making
- 4.15 ALEOs – the score agreed by members in this section was **3/4**.
- 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 There was duplication of effort with ALEOs reporting to several committees, reporting lines could be simplified.
- 4.17.2 Issue of conflicts of interest with members on both the ALEO Board and parent committee, members generally agree with officer recommendations however the process remains flawed.
- 4.17.3 ALEO Chief Executives attending Committee provided helpful context when discussing service implications.
- 4.18 Training – the score agreed by members in this section was **3/4**.
- 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 A named officer to act as a mentor on a one to one basis, as well as ongoing briefings and regular, smaller training sessions throughout the term would be helpful.

- 4.20.2 Induction training should be scheduled to take place over a longer period – the initial 8 weeks was overwhelming. Training should be recorded and made available to all members. Specific training on local government finance would be welcome.

## **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 concluded that the Committee is fulfilling its core remit. Members agreed that the reports were well written with adequate time for consideration. Officers supported the committee with briefings ahead of complex financial reports, this approach would be appreciated for other items.
- 4.23 Members also concluded that committee members should be offered training on local government finance as this is a specialised area, would provide context and help inform scrutiny and that the Committee would benefit from policy specific training throughout the term, and a reconsideration of scrutiny for Council Trusts.

## **5. Next Steps**

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- 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**

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

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

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

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

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- 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

## 9. Appendices

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9.1 None.