

# Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee

10.00am, Thursday 24 March 2022

## Review of Effectiveness of Scrutiny of the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work 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 Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee members on 7 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.

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# Report

## Review of Effectiveness of Scrutiny of the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work 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 Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee (HHFW) members on 7 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 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

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- 4.1 All HHFW members were invited to attend a workshop on 7 February 2022. The workshop evaluated current PMAs relevant to the HHFW 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.

Figure 1.1 – Scoring Criteria	
5	PMAs work well in this area and there is no need for change.
4	PMAs are working well but there are small changes that could be made to improve effectiveness.
3	PMAs 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 works well and the TORs are, for the most part, clear.

4.5.2 TORs have some minor grey areas such as the perception that anti-social behaviour was included in HHFW remit.

4.5.3 There was scope for improvement. For example, the remit of P&S could be streamlined, and elements could be delegated to the appropriate Executive Committee, specifically the economy remit could sit with HHFW.

4.5.4 Committee remits could align more specifically to directorates, this would provide greater clarity for members and make audit actions easier to track.

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 Referral reports were perfunctory if only for noting and should be either included in the business bulletin or the relevant information drafted into a bespoke report. The new report referral process was introduced to try to improve this.

4.8.2 The committee noted 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 **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 That the committee did spend an appropriate amount of time as required on individual reports, this would vary depending on report.
  - 4.11.2 Standard meeting frequency and the occasional special meeting as required was appropriate.
  - 4.11.3 Reports could be clearer and more concise – dialogue with officers to target what members need to know and what is helpful. Workshops and briefings ahead of larger items of business were valuable in gauging this information.
  - 4.11.4 There is a lengthy lead in time with the Convener and officers before reports reached APM which could be streamlined.
- 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 kept debate focused and the committee have the opportunity to refer to Council if further scrutiny was required.
- 4.15 ALEOs – the score agreed by members in this section was **2/3**.
- 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 ALEO reports should be standardised for consistency.
  - 4.17.2 Issue of conflicts of interest with members on both the ALEO Board and parent Committee, further scrutiny from GRBV reduces this conflict but it can feel ‘clumsy’.
  - 4.17.3 Training for members on ALEOs needed much improvement – responsibilities of sitting on an outside company were not fully understood.
- 4.18 Training – the score agreed by members in this section was **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 All councillors should have to attend training sessions, particularly those focused on TORs and responsibilities. This should be mandatory for both new and returning councillors.

4.20.2 Training offer was inconsistent between committees; sessions are an opportunity to build relationships between members who often only meet in committee.

4.20.3 Induction training should be scheduled to take place over 6 months – the initial 8 weeks was overwhelming. Specific training on policy challenges, legislative or COSLA updates throughout 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 felt both the TORs and volume of reports were balanced and allowed thorough scrutiny of the items presented. Members suggested that there is an opportunity to redistribute the business of the Policy and Sustainability (P&S) Committee and provide clarity of responsibility, for example, economy sits across P&S and HHFW.
- 4.23 Members specifically noted that the Committee would benefit from policy specific training throughout the term, and more dialogue with officers to target information contained in reports to what members want and need to know.

## **5. Next Steps**

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- 5.1 Equivalent self-evaluation workshops will be held with all executive committees. The outputs from these sessions 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 HHFW 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.