

Policy and Sustainability Committee

10.00am, Tuesday 29 March 2022

Review of Effectiveness of Scrutiny of the Policy and Sustainability 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 Policy and Sustainability Committee members on 10 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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Report

Review of Effectiveness of Scrutiny of the Policy and Sustainability Committee – Self-Evaluation and Lessons Learnt

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report provides a summary of a self-evaluation workshop undertaken by Policy and Sustainability Committee (PS) members on 10 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 have been scheduled with all executive committees and the outcomes 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

- 4.1 All PS members were invited to attend a workshop on 10 March 2022. The workshop evaluated current PMAs relevant to the PS 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 There is a benefit to having all the Convenors on a single committee.

4.5.3 However, there was still scope for improvement. For example, relationship between full Council and PS should be explored to determine how the workload could be reduced.

4.5.4 The committee is resource intensive, particularly felt by opposition political groups as they did not have Convenors on the committee, their members often needed briefings from colleagues to be able to contribute in a positive and meaningful way to reports at the committee.

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

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 There was agreement that there was a high workload for PS due to the scope of the remit and size and quantity of reports received, this can lead to debate and scrutiny being focussed on less strategic matters. Additionally, there was a concern that reports were often unnecessarily referred to PS.

4.8.2 It was noted that the opportunity should be taken to review arrangements for Police reporting.

4.8.3 Further clarification of the remit and relationship between Council and PS, could create a potential reduction in reports and would assist in addressing the workload of the committee.

4.8.4 There was a belief that the business bulletin (or alternative mechanism) could be used to improve the sharing of information from the Edinburgh Partnership and City Deal etc.

- 4.9 Number of reports and time spent on each report/meeting frequency - the score agreed by members in this section was **3**.
- 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 There was agreement that PS has a high volume of reports which can impact on the time spent on each report.
- 4.11.2 That the standard 8 weekly meeting cycle remained appropriate for the committee but there was a suggestion that it could move quarterly.
- 4.12 Composition of Committee and Number of Committee Members - the score agreed by members in this section was **2/3**.
- 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 There was agreement that the current composition of seventeen members is too large. However, it was recognised that any amendments to the committee's composition would be impacted by the political composition post-election.
- 4.14.2 There was debate on the benefits and drawbacks of executive committee conveners sitting on PS.
- 4.15 ALEOs – the score agreed by members in this section was **N/A**.
- 4.16 Elected members were asked:
- 4.16.1 Assess the Committee's role in regard to assurance, scrutiny and support of service delivery of ALEOs.
- 4.17 Points made during discussion included:
- 4.17.1 There were different positions regarding the benefits of Councillors sitting on boards of ALEOs and the assurance and scrutiny they can gain from doing so, and the changes in the Councillors' Code of Conduct in December 2021 regarding conflicts of interest were noted.
- 4.18 Training – the score agreed by members in this section was **N/A**.
- 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 During induction, new Councillors should be made aware of the availability of officers to aid in the understanding of reports before committee meetings. This could allow them to have a better understanding of the report, avoids unnecessary questions and more efficient committees
- 4.20.2 Training focussing on the practicalities of Council and Committee meetings should be provided to assist Councillors in providing positive and effective contributions in decision-making and scrutiny.
- 4.20.3 The format, accessibility and ongoing delivery of training sessions should be reviewed to find an improved way of delivering the content and ensuring Councillors gained the maximum benefit. This should include the exploration of ongoing subject matter training for Councillors.

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.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Equivalent self-evaluation workshops are being 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 PS 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

9. Appendices

- 9.1 None.