

**SCRUTINY AND GOVERNANCE MANAGEMENT PANEL.**

Minutes of meeting in County Buildings, Wellington Square, Ayr  
on 3rd May 2011 at 2.00 p.m.

Present: Councillors Ian Douglas (Chair), Stan Fisher, Hugh Hunter, Elaine Little and Helen Moonie.

Apology: Councillor Winifred Sloan.

Attending: V. Andrews, Head of Legal and Administration; C. Monaghan, Head of Policy, Performance and Communication; C. Gardner, Senior Strategic Planning and Performance Management Officer; and E. Wyllie, Committee Administrative Officer.

**1. Minutes of previous meetings.**

**Decided:** to note the Minutes of the previous meeting of 1st March 2011 (issued).

**2. Call-in Arrangements – Annual Review and Statistics.**

There was submitted a report (issued) of 21st April 2011 by the Head of Legal and Administration

- (1) informing of statistics relating to Call-ins during the period from April 2010 to March 2011 and providing a further breakdown of these Call-ins as outlined within the Appendices to the report; and
- (2) suggesting that, as a result of previous feedback from Officers and Members, consideration be given to the following:-
  - requesting a legal representative being present for any call-ins;
  - clarifying the process for how to minute call-ins;
  - Members not on Standing Scrutiny Panels, commenting on other Panel items not related to Call-ins during meetings;
  - increasing the role of Standing Scrutiny Panel Members in actioning Call-in requests as per the Council's Standing Orders; and
  - encourage role of the Portfolio-holder in responding to Call-ins.

A full discussion took place and various points were made by Members of the Panel in respect of:-

- whether there was any significant value in continuing with presenting the data in this format;
- the role of scrutiny and the operation of the current scrutiny process and ways in which this could be improved;
- this Panel's role in relation to overseeing the Standing Scrutiny Panels, if scrutiny should be outcome driven and whether a Select Committee type system would be useful;
- ways in which to ascertain if decision making was effective and resulted in an improvement, or otherwise, and if this could then be measured;
- the roles of Chair, Panel Members and Officers;
- Officer attendance at Panel meetings and their contribution/support; and
- whether a call-in protocol would be useful, should time slots be allocated or would this be deemed to stifle scrutiny.

The Head of Legal and Administration and the Head of Policy, Performance and Communication responded on the various issues raised and the Chair suggested that a report be presented to the next meeting relating to the discussion which had taken place at this meeting, including the idea of a call-in protocol.

**Decided:**

- (a) to note the statistical data presented within the Appendices to the report; and
- (b) that the Head of Legal and Administration and the Head of Policy, Performance and Communication would provide a discussion report to the next meeting of this Panel based on the discussion at this meeting.

**3. Observing Arrangements**

There was submitted a report (issued) of 21st April 2011 by the Head of Legal and Administration

- (1) suggesting ways in which Members of this Panel could attend meetings of the three Standing Scrutiny Panels, in an observing capacity, for the purposes of identifying areas of good practice and assessing performance; and
- (2) reporting that the Head of Legal and Administration and the Head of Policy, Performance and Communication would attend some Scrutiny Committees/Panels operated by other Councils in Scotland to compare practice elsewhere with their findings being reported to a subsequent meeting of this Panel.

The Chair suggested that, where possible, any Panel Member should observe at any of the Standing Scrutiny Panels of which they were not a Member with each observer completing the Brief should they so wish.

A discussion took place in relation to discussing the findings with the Standing Scrutiny Panel Chairs and it was suggested that the three Chairs be invited to attend the next meeting of this Panel for that purpose.

**Decided:**

- (a) that each Member would undertake visits, in an observing capacity, to the forthcoming meetings of the Standing Scrutiny Panels to which they were not already Members;
- (b) to note that the Chairs of each of the Standing Scrutiny Panels would be notified of the forthcoming visit and its purpose;
- (c) that Members should complete the Observing Brief, attached as Appendix 2 of the report and forward to the Head of Legal and Administration by no later than Friday, 3rd June 2011 who would subsequently compile a Note of these findings to be submitted to the meeting of this Panel on 28th June 2011 for consideration;
- (d) that these findings would also be discussed with the Standing Scrutiny Panel Chairs and that they would be invited to attend the next scheduled meeting of this Panel on 28th June 2011 for this purpose; and
- (e) to note the intention of the Head of Legal and Administration and the Head of Policy, Performance and Communication to undertake visits to some other Scottish Councils to enable comparisons to be made with scrutiny arrangements elsewhere with the outcome from this exercise being reported to a future meeting of this Panel.

#### **4. Delivering Good Governance – Review of Principles 5 and 6.**

There was submitted a report (issued) of 19th April 2011 by the Head of Policy, Performance and Communication

- (1) aiming to assist Members with their review of the Council's Delivering Good Governance Framework through providing an assessment of the Council's position in relation to the fifth and sixth principles of 'Skills' and 'Accountability';
- (2) reporting that the appendices to the report outlined the Council's current arrangements in relation to Principles 5 and 6, in a similar manner to those previously presented and indicating that, following the discussion at the last Panel meeting, a slight shift of emphasis had been made to avoid implying that the Panel was being asked to validate a self-assessment;
- (3) outlining that Members were being asked to follow through from the survey work done in relation to the Framework to see whether in practice, the Framework with its various procedures, processes and strategies etc. was actually helping Members and Officers to deliver good governance;
- (4) highlighting that, as outlined in previous reports, the aim of the Panel discussing these appendices was not to tick a box but rather to explore the strengths and weaknesses of Council arrangements and how they functioned in practice; and
- (5) advising that the outcome from this discussion and those against the other principles would then be reflected in preparing the overall year-end assessment which would be submitted to the next meeting of this Panel.

A full discussion took place and various points were made in relation to the information contained within the appendices, particularly in respect of:- the Members' survey and participation levels; the self assessment process and supporting framework; clarification on the content of the feedback column; whether the training requirements of Elected Members were being met at the various levels of need; the requirement to have appropriate training in place for new Members following the local Election in 2012 and the Head of Policy, Performance and Communication and the Senior Strategic Planning and Performance Management Officer responded accordingly. The Head of Policy, Performance and Communication commented on the development of a core set of training for prospective Elected Members and also suggested that the Head of HR and Organisational Development could provide an update on this and current Members' training to the next meeting.

#### **Decided:**

- (a) to confirm that the statements provided an accurate and concise assessment of the Council's current arrangements in relation to 'Skills' and 'Accountability';
- (b) that the Council should strengthen its current arrangements in relation to these principles; and
- (c) that the Head of HR and Organisational Development be invited to the next meeting to provide an update on training and development for Members.

The meeting ended at 4.00 p.m.