

SCRUTINY AND GOVERNANCE MANAGEMENT PANEL.

Minutes of meeting in County Buildings, Wellington Square, Ayr
on 10th September 2013 at 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillors Brian McGinley (Chair), Alec. Clark, Allan Dorans, John Hampton, Hugh Hunter and Provost Helen Moonie.

Attending: C. Monaghan, Head of Policy, Community Planning and Public Affairs; and E. Wyllie, Committee Services Officer.

Also Attending: Councillor Brian Connolly.

1. Declaration of Interest.

There were no declarations of interest by Members of the Panel in terms of Council Standing Order No. 17 and the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

2. Minutes of previous meeting.

Decided: to note the Minutes of the previous meeting of 11th June 2013 (issued) ([link attached](#)).

At this point, the Chair welcomed the Chairs of the Standing Scrutiny Panels to the meeting (the Chair of the Development and Environment Standing Scrutiny Panel was unable to attend this meeting) and invited them to participate in the discussion of the following item.

3. Update on Review of Scrutiny Processes and Scheme of Delegation.

Reference was made to the Minutes of South Ayrshire Council of 27th June 2013 (Page 5, paragraph 10) and there was submitted a report (issued) ([link attached](#)) updating Members following the approval granted at the meeting of the Council on 27th June 2013 to further review the Scheme of Delegation and existing Scrutiny arrangements.

A full discussion took place in relation to scrutiny processes including the Guidance for Undertaking Scrutiny Reviews and the current Scheme of Delegation which consisted of two sections, being the Administration of the Council and that pertaining to Officers.

Following this discussion, the Panel suggested that a course of action be developed based on the following key points.

In terms of the selection process for the review of scrutiny topics, it was recognised that the approval mechanism was in need of review. The extent of the independent nature of Scrutiny Panels was debated. It was felt that this was too restrictive and perhaps the Leadership Panel's role was too significant in the identification and selection process although it was recognised that the Council had a part to play. Comments were also made in relation to the extent of the use of performance management data in this process and if other factors were also considered. In this regard, there was potential for added value by way of external involvement and verification. Overall, it was recognised that the Guidance document required to be refreshed and, to assist in this matter, Members of the Panel were encouraged to provide feedback on this document to the Head of Policy, Community Planning and Public Affairs in order to commence this part of the process.

It was noted that the relationship between Scrutiny Panels and Portfolio-holders was an important part of the scrutiny review/referral process although greater visibility of these distinct roles was required. Similarly, policy development and to what extent scrutiny had a role in this regard should be explored. The role of Officers was also relevant in terms of capacity issues and timeframes for scrutiny reviews.

A discussion took place in respect of decision tracking mechanisms and an opportunity to scrutinise and assess the impact of these decisions on service delivery, perhaps over an 18 month timeframe. In the shorter term, an action log and matters arising from previous minutes could be useful tools to monitor the status of agreed actions.

As well as dealing with reviews and referrals, it was suggested that Standing Scrutiny Panels could have core items of business on the Agenda to enable Members to gain in-depth knowledge. The Head of Policy, Community Planning and Public Affairs commented that Members of the Development and Environment Standing Scrutiny Panel were currently receiving a series of informal Officer-led presentations for this purpose.

The scope for peer reviews in partnership with other Councils was discussed and it was noted that benchmarking information could be a route into this area although such an approach would require careful consideration.

In terms of Members' training and workshops, it was noted that these were reviewed on an ongoing basis. Clarification was sought as to whether structural changes via 'Raising our Ambition' meant that Standing Scrutiny Panel structures should be revised. The Head of Policy, Community Planning and Public Affairs commented on the mapping of the Council's Directorate structure against the Standing Scrutiny Panels' crosscutting remits.

Clarification was sought in relation to locality planning development and the Head of Policy, Community Planning and Public Affairs advised that the Head of Children's Services was leading the development of a locality planning model in preparation for the integration of health and social care services linked to community planning.

Following discussion with regard to possible visits to other local authorities, it was noted that the Head of Policy, Community Planning and Public Affairs would discuss areas of good scrutiny practice within other local authorities with Audit Scotland and the Improvement Services and provide feedback to Members. The Panel suggested that it would like to visit Stirling Council, Falkirk Council, East Renfrewshire Council and Dumfries and Galloway Council as part of the review of scrutiny and the Scheme of Delegation.

A discussion took place in relation to the Scheme of Delegation and it was suggested that, in the interim, the Chair could explore this Scheme with assistance from other Panel Members, if available and report his findings to the next meeting.

The Chair thanked everyone for their input and the Head of Policy, Community Planning and Public Affairs was tasked with preparing an Action Plan including timelines, incorporating the key issues highlighted above, for circulation to Members for their comment.

Decided:

- (1) to agree that Officers would progress with the proposals as outlined at paragraphs 4.1 and 4.2 of the report; and
- (2) that, on this basis and the discussion taken place at this meeting, Officers would prepare an Action Plan with timelines for circulation to Members for comment prior to submission to the next meeting of this Panel taking place on 19th November 2013 for its consideration.

The meeting ended at 12.05 p.m.