

SCRUTINY AND GOVERNANCE MANAGEMENT PANEL.

Minutes of meeting in County Buildings, Wellington Square, Ayr
on 19th November 2013 at 10.00 a.m.

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

Attending: V. Andrews, Acting Executive Director – Resources, Governance and Organisation; C. Monaghan, Head of Policy, Community Planning and Public Affairs; C. Gardner, Senior Strategic Planning and Performance Management Officer; and E. Wyllie, Committee Services Officer.

The Chairs of the Corporate and Community Planning and the Development and Environment Standing Scrutiny Panels were unable to attend this meeting and tendered apologies.

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 approve the Minutes of the previous meeting of 10th September 2013 (issued) ([link attached](#)).

3. Minutes – Review of Current Practices.

There was submitted a report (issued) ([link attached](#)) of 8th November 2013 by the Acting Executive Director – Resources, Governance and Organisation advising of the current position in relation to the six months trial period approved by the Council on 25th April 2013 relating to the format of Minutes which had been adapted to incorporate a description or summary of discussion and questions dealt with in order to record the 'flavour' of the debate where possible.

The Acting Executive Director – Resources, Governance and Organisation advised that the new style of minuting was resource intensive and suggested that the trial be continued for a further six month period due to staffing structure reviews in light of budgetary considerations and also pending the outcome of the review of the Scheme of Delegation and any impact this might have.

A full discussion took place in relation to the current format of Minutes with the consensus being that this new style met with the Panel's approval and, as a result of this successful pilot exercise, that the recording of Minutes in this format should continue beyond the suggested six month extension of the pilot. It was noted that, within the context of budgetary proposals and any subsequent implications for the resourcing of this provision, the Panel would highlight this matter to the relevant Portfolio-holder seeking support for the continuance of this new practice.

The Panel

Decided:

- (1) that, following the successful six month pilot of the new format of Minutes, this new style be continued and, in this regard, that this be highlighted to the relevant Portfolio-holder seeking support for the necessary resources for the continuance of this new practice; and

- (2) to note that the Acting Executive Director – Resources, Governance and Organisation would provide an update on this matter to the meeting of this Panel on 1st April 2014.

4. Action Plan/ Panel Work Programme.

Reference was made to the previous Minutes of 10th September 2013 (Page 1, paragraph 3) and there was submitted a report (issued) ([link attached](#)) of 8th November 2013 by the Acting Executive Director – Resources, Governance and Organisation seeking agreement for an Action Plan developed following the discussion at the previous meeting on the Review of Scrutiny Processes and the Scheme of Delegation and seeking approval for this Plan as the Panel Work programme for 2013/14.

A discussion took place in relation to the thematic based work programme and actions contained therein and it was noted that this formed a continuous programme which outlined roles and responsibilities as well as timeframes which would be helpful for evaluation purposes as the Plan progressed. On this basis, the Plan would be subject to revision as and when required. For instance, the Panel discussed the actions contained within the theme relating to both elements of the review of the Scheme of Delegation and it was suggested that this be revised to reflect the consensus that a series of informal working group sessions be arranged to review the Scheme in more detail involving those Members of the Panel who were able to participate in such sessions. It was also noted that due dates for some actions would require to be revised to reflect the discussion at this meeting.

The Panel

Decided:

- (1) to approve the Action Plan, attached as Appendix 2 of the report, and adopt this Plan as the Panel's updated Work Programme subject to continuous review and adjustment as necessary with the Plan being a standing item at each Panel meeting as a progress update report; and
- (2) to agree that the membership of the informal Working Group to commence reviewing the Scheme of Delegation would consist of Councillors Hampton, McGinley and Moonie, and including Councillor Clark when possible, with the first session of this Working Group being arranged for January 2014.

5. Update on Best Practice in Scrutiny.

Reference was made to the previous Minutes of 10th September 2013 (Page 1, paragraph 3) and there was submitted a report (issued) ([link attached](#)) of 8th November 2013 by the Acting Executive Director – Resources, Governance and Organisation providing an update on the progress being made with possible Scrutiny visits to other local authorities and to seek Panel comments and agreement on a draft checklist of key points to capture information during visits for comparison purposes, attached as Appendix 1 of the report.

A discussion took place in relation to the proposed checklist for potential visits and it was noted that this would be a useful document to capture key points for comparison purposes. It was also suggested that perhaps further information should be sought prior to any visit being undertaken and it was noted that the Acting Executive Director – Resources, Governance and Organisation and the Chair would undertake discussions with their counterparts from other local authorities prior to any possible visits being arranged.

The Panel

Decided: to approve the checklist of key points attached as Appendix 1 of the report and, meantime, to agree that the Acting Executive Director – Resources, Governance and Organisation and the Chair would participate in discussions with their counterparts from other local authorities prior to any possible visits being arranged.

6. Delivering Good Governance – Update on Improvement Actions.

There was submitted a report (issued) ([link attached](#)) of 8th November 2013 by the Head of Policy, Community Planning and Public Affairs inviting Members to review the progress against the 2013/14 improvement actions that were agreed in relation to the Council's Delivering Good Governance Framework.

A discussion took place in relation to various aspects of community engagement processes and concerns were raised in relation to the status of this action and whether this was an accurate reflection of progress. It was explained that there was a spectrum of community engagement methods in use as well as ongoing discussions with community councils and forums. It was recognised that the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill would have a bearing on this and Members were advised that there was to be a forthcoming workshop on the recently launched consultation in December 2013 with a local policy being developed thereafter.

Comments were made regarding a range of work which had been undertaken by Members of a previous Panel in respect of the development of an engagement strategy and whether this work would be utilised. It was suggested that 'engagement', 'consultation' and 'participation' required clearer definition with regard to the role of communities and the relationship with the Council bearing in mind the requirement to also manage expectations. It was noted that these comments would be further explored within the context of the draft legislation.

The role of audit processes was discussed as well as benchmarking and best practice across local authorities. Clarification was sought as to whether locality planning would have a bearing on engagement processes and the relationship with, and scrutiny of, community planning was also raised. The Head of Policy, Community Planning and Public Affairs advised that, currently, performance information relating to community planning was reported to the Corporate and Community Planning Standing Scrutiny Panel; however she anticipated that the new legislation explored the role of scrutiny in greater detail as it pertained to other partners.

The Panel, having raised concerns in relation to the progress of community engagement, otherwise

Decided: to note the progress achieved to date against the improvement actions as outlined in Appendix 1 to the report.

Councillor Hunter left the meeting during the foregoing item the time being 11.10 a.m.

The meeting ended at 11.30 a.m.