

SCRUTINY AND GOVERNANCE MANAGEMENT PANEL.

Minutes of meeting in County Buildings, Wellington Square, Ayr,
on 1st March 2011 at 10.00 a.m.

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

Apology: Councillor Hugh Hunter.

Attending: V. Andrews, Head of Legal and Administration; C. Monaghan, Head of Policy, Performance and Communication; J. Bradley, Organisational Development Manager; 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 7th December 2010 (issued).

2. Elected Member Training and Development.

There was submitted a report (issued) of 17th February 2011 by the Head of HR and Organisational Development

(1) advising

- (a) that during 2009/10, Elected Members had taken part in annual training needs analyses meetings against the agreed role profiles and separate meetings also had taken place to review development needs against the national CPD framework introduced by the Improvement Service;
- (b) that the role profiles for Elected Members had now been aligned with the Improvement Service Framework to ensure that the Council had a clear set of competencies against which development needs could be identified; and
- (c) that during 2010/11 annual training needs analyses had been carried out, with a small number still to be finalised with revised Personal Development Plans for 2011/12 now being prepared; and

(2) informing

- (a) that the Lunch and Learn and Breakfast Briefing events continued to prove very successful, with a full programme in place up to the summer recess and reporting that a new programme was also being developed for Autumn with Officers undertaking a review of the current format to identify opportunities for improved delivery;
- (b) that all development activities would continue to be evaluated to ensure they were meeting the needs of all Members in line with job profiles and continuing priorities;
- (c) that Officers were also reviewing how to develop the support available to Members through the Council's E-learning programme – COAST and highlighting that, on an ongoing basis, learning options would be reviewed during 2011 to ensure that relevant content was made available; and

- (d) that further work would be undertaken by Officers across the Council throughout 2011 to develop a comprehensive induction package for Elected Members aimed at the Local Government Elections in 2012.

Various questions were raised by Members of the Panel in respect of:- the reported success of the training events and how had this been measured; and hospitality for far travelled delegates visiting the Council for training events and Officers responded accordingly.

Decided: to note the proposals for training and development throughout 2011/12.

3. Delivering Good Governance – Review of Principles 3 and 4.

There was submitted a report (issued) of 17th February 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 the consideration of updated statements for the third and fourth principles of 'Values' and 'Decision Making'; and
- (2) reporting that the appendices to the report outlined an assessment of the Council's current arrangements in relation to Principles 3 and 4, in the same manner as was adopted for Principle 1, with additional sections having been added:- to cover developments; comparisons of the survey of Members between 2008 and 2010; and other observations from relevant reports and sources since the initial assessment on 31st March 2010.

Various questions were raised in relation to the information contained within the appendices, particularly in respect of:- the Big Budget Challenge and how effective had this exercise been, taking into account costs; and whether there was scope for an evaluation process to be factored into the reporting mechanism presented to this Panel 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 that the Council were due to embark on an exercise entitled 'How Good Is Our Council' and that this would complement the work of Delivering Good Governance and present an overall picture which should hopefully address concerns in relation to evaluation.

Decided: to confirm that the statements provided an accurate and concise assessment of the Council's current arrangements in relation to 'Values' and 'Decision Making' and for future reporting the Head of Policy, Performance and Communication would explore ways in which evidence based findings could be included within the format.

4. Update on Progress in considering the Audit Scotland Report on Roles and Relationships.

Reference was made to the Minutes of 7th December 2010 (Page 1, paragraph 2) and there was submitted a joint report (issued) of 22nd February 2011 by the Head of Policy, Performance and Communication and the Head of Legal and Administration

- (1) updating Members on the progress being made in considering the Audit Scotland report *Roles and Relationships: are you getting it right?* which highlighted the value of strong, positive working relationships between Councillors and Officers and intimating that this report also contained annexes with issues for Members and Officers to respectively consider;

- (2) advising that a workshop had taken place on 4th February 2011 for Members of this Panel when a productive and wide-ranging discussion had taken place and the following key points were raised:-
- consideration of the information being provided to Members to support decision-making and recognising that there was a balance between giving Members every detail on every issue and therefore unwieldy and complex papers and giving them sufficient information to make a robust decision with this recognised as being at the centre of the trust relationship between Officers and Members;
 - recognising that Members had the responsibility to probe and seek information if they had concerns and that, in general, Officers were responsive to requests for additional information;
 - the extent to which Members were sighted on the impact of decisions over time and that decisions were made and their implementation followed through but there was not a systematic process for checking back that the decision had the anticipated impact with this being identified as a possible area for scrutiny in the future;
 - how trust could be built up and whether senior Officers and Councillors spent sufficient time discussing issues at an early stage and that, on some issues, there might be merit in wider discussions at an earlier point in the gestation;
 - using technology to the maximum to get the best out of time and it was noted that new procedures had been introduced to text Officers when required at meetings and that a trial had been conducted on using Prism to remotely join in on Panel sessions and that, for these technologies to support improved time management, a strong established relationship was required;
 - detailed questioning at Panels could be intimidating for Officers, particularly more junior Officers; and
 - training and whether there was scope for more of it to be done internally given the Council's high quality HR section; and
- (3) reporting that the annexe of questions for Officers was now being considered and the outcome of that would be reported to this Panel at its next meeting on 3rd May 2011 along with any recommendations for refining the approach to the Delivering Good Governance Framework.

Decided: to note

- (a) the progress being made in considering the report including the workshop for Members of this Panel; and
- (b) the intention to bring forward a summary view from Officers to the meeting of this Panel on 3rd May 2011 along with any recommendations emerging from the consideration of the report.

The meeting ended at 10.35 a.m.