REPORT BY THE SHORT LIFE WORKING GROUP ON POLITICAL MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

1. SUMMARY

1.1 At the Executive meeting on 21 April 2011 it was agreed to set up a short life working group to progress the development of revised Political Management Arrangements. This report highlights the recommendations made by the Short Life Working Group following their consideration of these arrangements.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 To note the contents of the report.

2.2 To agree to recommend the findings of the Short Life Working Group to the first meeting of the new Council for implementation.

3. DETAIL

3.1 The Short Life Working Group on Political Management Arrangements met on 12 August 2011, 12 October 2011, 2 December 2011 and 4 April 2012.

3.2 At these meetings the Short Life Working Group considered reports by the Executive Director - Customer Services which set out a series of options for consideration in the review of political management arrangements for Argyll and Bute Council.

3.3 The following is a summary of the decisions that were made at the meetings of the Group :-

    3.3.1 Agreed that the Executive is fit for purpose and should continue in its current format, but noted the minority view that the Executive was not fit for purpose and that alternative models should be investigated.

    3.3.2 Agreed that, in terms of structure, the Planning Protective Services and Licensing Committee is fit for purpose.

    3.3.3 Agreed that the Audit Committee is fit for purpose and that no changes to its remit, composition or membership should be made.

    3.3.4 Agreed therefore that there be no change to the remit, composition or membership of the Executive, PPSL or Audit Committee.

3.3.5 Agreed, in principle, to the establishment of a Performance Review and Scrutiny Committee on the basis set out in the Appendix to this report, and that there be 10 Members appointed to this Committee consisting 4 from the Opposition Groups, 3 non-Executive Members of the Administration and 3 CPP Partner nominees plus 1 independent Chair.

3.3.6 Agreed, in principle, to the creation of short life Policy Development Groups.

3.3.7 Agreed to adjust the Constitution to provide for the creation of Policy Development Groups by either the Council or the Executive; agreed in principle to operate them as had been done in the past and to remit the Executive Director of Customer Services to modify the Constitution to regulate the procedures of such groups.

3.3.8 Agreed that Area Committees, Local Area Community Planning Groups and Area Business Days continue to be held, but that scheduling and frequency of these meetings be altered.

3.3.9 Noted the Council would still be on target for reducing the number of meetings held after the proposed changes had taken place.

4. AREA MEETINGS

4.1 It is proposed that Area Committees and Local Area Community Planning Groups should meet on a quarterly basis, on the same day, with the Area Committee being held in the morning and the Local Area Community Planning Group being held in the afternoon. These meetings should be held in March, June, September and December each year, and to ensure that agenda items which are common to all four Areas are considered within the space of seven working days thereby ensuring efficient progression of matters which are corporate or common to either the Council or any Core Partners, it is proposed that Bute and Cowal would meet on the first Tuesday of the relevant month, MAKI on the first Wednesday, Helensburgh Lomond on the second Tuesday and OLI on the second Wednesday. This proposal to have these meetings on these dates, if agreed, will, of course, require to be made to the Community Planning Partnership for their approval prior to implementation. Meeting agendas will be structured to allow participation on all matters by all parties, but decisions on matters within the Terms of Reference of Area Committees shall be made only by Councillors. Remaining items will be dealt with by all parties, with each partner having the right to have their views recorded in the event that consensus cannot be reached.

4.2 Currently, Area Committees have a series of Area Business Days which provide a less formal discussion forum than Committee meetings for elected Members and officers to work on service issues which are of significance to the Area. It is anticipated that there will be a strong appetite amongst Members for these business meetings to continue. It is proposed that Area Business Days be half day meetings held 4 times per year in months when the Area Committee/Local Area Community Planning Group is NOT taking place, ie business meetings be held in January, April, August, and October. Scheduling business meetings in this way would enable any items discussed at these meetings to be effectively progressed by officers and partners and then included, as appropriate, at the next Scheduled Area Committee. This scheduling would also leave July meeting free in accordance with the Council's current recognition of July as recess month. It is suggested that business meetings take place in the morning on the same day as scheduled Area Committee etc meetings, ie Bute and Cowal meeting on the first Tuesday, MAKI on the first Wednesday, Helensburgh Lomond on the second Tuesday and OLI on the second Wednesday of the relevant month.

4.3 In terms of Member's time commitment to their Area work the proposals outlined above would give effect to a reduction in days spent on Area Committee business from the current 11 days (6 Area Committees plus 5 LACPG's) to 4 full days for these, plus 4 half day business meetings per year. Area Committees would, of course, be able to have less frequent business days if they were so minded, as is currently the case. In addition, it is proposed that Members would be involved in one Area Forum, similar to the previously held Forward Together Events meeting of the Local Area Community Planning Partnership per year, which it is suggested would take place in November. As noted at 4.1 above, the proposal to hold the Area Forum in November, if agreed, will also require to be presented as a recommendation from the Council to the Community Planning Partnership for their approval prior to implementation. In addition resources would have to be identified from partners as appropriate to facilitate this type of event.

5. POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUPS

5.1 Policy Development Groups will be appointed in terms of the Scheme of Administration and Delegations which is referred to in Standing Order 26.

5.2 Standing Orders 2.1, 2.3, 2.4, 3.1 – 3.5, 7.1 – 7.4 and 17.1 will apply to meetings of any Policy Development Group.

5.3 MEETINGS OF POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUPS

5.3.1 Without prejudice to the general right of the Council, or the Executive (referred to in this Standing Order as an appointing body) to appoint a Policy Development Group at any time, a minimum of any six Members may propose that a Policy Development Group should be established; the following procedure will apply to the establishment of a Group on the proposal of two or more Members.

5.3.1.1   The Members concerned will set out in a notice to be given to the Executive Director of Customer Services the matters on which it is proposed the Group should be asked to provide advice, together with such other relevant material as the members concerned consider the appointing body might usefully require in order to reach a decision whether or not to establish such a Group;

5.3.1.2   The Executive Director of Customer Services will include the proposal, together with the written material provided by the Members, on the agenda for the next following ordinary meeting of the Executive.

5.3.1.3   In the circumstances that a proposal to establish a Group is to be considered by the Executive then the first two Members signing the proposal will be entitled to speak, but not vote, at the meeting of the Executive at which the proposal is considered even if these two Members are not members of the Committee;

5.3.1.4   In considering a proposal (whether or not submitted in terms of sub-paragraph (1) above) to establish a Policy Development Group, an appointing body may (a) determine that, instead of appointing a Group, the matter contained in the proposal may be added to the Terms of Reference of an existing Group or (b) in the circumstances where (a) does not apply the committee shall resolve either to require a report from the appropriate officer on the implications of establishing such a group in respect of the resources required to take forward the work of the group, the current status (if any) of Council policy on the matter and any other matters relevant to their deliberations to a future meeting of the appointing body or (c) decline to establish such a group without further deliberation

5.3.1.5   When a Policy Development Group is established, the appointing body will appoint the Members of the Group, appoint two of those Members who are Councillors to be the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Group respectively, specify the matters on which the Group is to provide advice, specify the timescale within which the Group is to submit its report or recommendations and any other ancillary matters regarding the operation of the Group as may be desirable.

5.3.1.6   While, normally, a Policy Development Group will report and provide advice to the Executive, the Council or the Executive when establishing a Group may direct that the Policy Development Group reports, instead or in addition, to another constituent part of the Council.

5.3.1.7   At the end of the period mentioned in sub-paragraph (5) of this Standing Order the Group will cease to exist unless before the end of that period the appointing body has substituted a revised period.

5.3.1.8   It will be open to the Executive at any time in the event that the Committee considers the resources available to support the work of Policy Development Groups is insufficient, to recommend to the Council that no further Groups should be established or that the number in total should be limited. If such a recommendation is made no proposal to establish a Policy Development Group which would be contrary to the Council resolution shall be considered unless and until the Council has altered or rescinded that resolution.

5.3.2   The arrangements for meetings of a Policy Development Group will be a matter for the Group concerned, but the chair of a Group may for good cause cancel or alter the place, date or time for a meeting of a Group and may call a meeting of a Group on dates in addition to those already decided by the Group, but not after the summons for the meeting has been issued.

5.3.3   In addition to any report or paper submitted by an Officer of the Council, any Member of a Policy Development Group may, in relation to any research which she/he may have undertaken, submit a report or paper for consideration by the Group, provided that report or paper is made available in time for inclusion with the agenda of business for the meeting, and any other Member of the Council may similarly submit such report or paper and may speak to the Policy Development Group in relation to that report or paper.

5.3.4   In addition to the consideration of any report or paper submitted by a Member or Officer, a Policy Development Group may seek and/or consider a report, paper or presentation from other persons, whether inside or outside the Council, but such persons shall not participate as Members of the Group.

5.3.5   While the minimum quorum for an effective meeting of a Policy Development Group to take place will be three Members of the Group, the report or reports of the Group which contain the advice and recommendations of the Group will require to be considered at a meeting of the Group at which at least half of the Members of the Group are present.

5.3.6 The content of the advice or recommendations which any Group provides will be reached if possible by consensus amongst the Members of the Group, and in the event of any difference of view which will be determined in accordance with these Standing Orders as they would apply to a meeting of a Committee of the Council, the report or reports of the Group will in addition to the advice and recommendations of the Group include a note setting out the views of those Members who may not concur with that advice or those recommendations. Other decisions by the Group relating to their procedure and operation will be reached in accordance with these Standing Orders as they would apply to a meeting of a Committee of the Council.

6. CONCLUSIONS.

6.1 The Short Life Working Group has considered existing Political Management Arrangements and taken cognisance of views expressed to it and the need to ensure that these arrangements remain fit for purpose as the Council moves forward. Specifically, concerns about Performance Review and Scrutiny and corporate Policy Development have been addressed in the recommendations being made in this report. Additionally, changes being recommended in regard to frequency and scheduling of Area Committee and Local Area Community Planning meetings should enable more efficient decision making and service overview at local level across the Council.

7. IMPLICATIONS

Policy:

Financial:

Personnel:

Equal Opportunities:

For further information contact: Douglas Hendry Executive Director, Customer Services

Date: 12th April 2012

Appendix 1, Performance Review and Scrutiny Committee.

The Performance Review and Scrutiny Committee will be responsible for the following:

Performance Review

(1) Reviewing performance when viewed against policy objectives arising from:

   a) The Planning and Performance Management Framework and the quarterly performance reports to committee.
   b) External inspection reports e.g. School Inspections.
   c) The Community Planning Partnership and other major partnership projects.
   d) Specific performance reports requested by the committee.
   e) Ad hoc performance reports presented to the Committee by Chief Officials.
   f) Any other reports of a performance-related nature.

(2) Making recommendation to the Executive on performance matters in relation to (1) above.

Scrutiny

(1) Monitoring the delivery of corporate improvement programmes and ensuring that they are progressing in line with corporate aims and objectives. Reporting findings and recommendations to the Executive.

(2) Commenting on decisions and policies agreed by the Executive and other committees and the impact they have on Argyll and Bute as an area, and making recommendations as appropriate to the Executive.

(3) Inviting Executive members to attend and elaborate on Executive decisions or proposals.