

Argyll and Bute Council
Comhairle Earra-Ghàidheal Agus Bhòid

Executive Director: Douglas Hendry



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17 January 2022

NOTICE OF MEETING

A meeting of the **SHORT LIFE WORKING GROUP ON POLITICAL MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS** will be held **BY TEAMS** on **TUESDAY, 25 JANUARY 2022** at **2:00 PM**, which you are requested to attend.

Douglas Hendry
Executive Director

BUSINESS

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (IF ANY)

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Minutes of the Short Life Working Group on Political Management Arrangements of 22 December 2021. (Pages 3 - 4)

4. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM SHORT LIFE WORKING GROUP ON POLITICAL MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Legal and Regulatory Support (Pages 5 - 14)

5. RURAL ISSUES

Briefing note by Executive Director with responsibility for Legal and Regulatory Support (Pages 15 - 16)

Short Life Working Group on Political Management Arrangements

Councillor Robin Currie (Chair)	Councillor Audrey Forrest
Councillor George Freeman	Councillor Kieron Green
Councillor Jim Lynch	Councillor Liz McCabe
Councillor Yvonne McNeilly (Vice-Chair)	
Councillor Aileen Morton	Councillor Sandy Taylor
Councillor Andrew Vennard	

Contact: Stuart McLean Tel: 01436 658717

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MINUTES of MEETING of SHORT LIFE WORKING GROUP ON POLITICAL MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS held by MICROSOFT TEAMS on WEDNESDAY, 22 DECEMBER 2021

Present:

Councillor Robin Currie (Chair)

Councillor Audrey Forrest
Councillor George Freeman
Councillor Kieron Green
Councillor Jim Lynch

Councillor Liz McCabe
Councillor Yvonne McNeilly
Councillor Aileen Morton
Councillor Sandy Taylor

Attending:

Douglas Hendry, Executive Director
David Logan, Head of Legal and Regulatory Support
Tricia O'Neill, Governance Manager
Stuart McLean, Area Committee Manager
Shona Barton, Area Committee Manager

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest intimated.

3. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Short Life Working Group held on Tuesday 30 November 2021 were approved as a correct record.

4. POLITICAL MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS - ENGAGEMENT

At the first meeting of the SLWG on 30 November Members agreed to engage with all 36 Elected Members seeking their views on how the current Political Management Arrangements were working. The SLWG considered and discussed the feedback received from Members highlighted at Appendix 1 and agreed the next steps to progress the review of the Political Management Arrangements (PMAs).

Decision

The Short Life Working Group agreed to include the following in a draft report for consideration at the next meeting:

Strategic Committees (Questions 1 & 2)

General consensus that Strategic Committees should remain, but that consideration should be given to their remits and their meeting frequency.

SLWG acknowledged that increased participation from all members enriches policy discussion, consequently encouraging attendance of non-committee Councillors to be included within the Members induction programme following Local Government Elections scheduled for May 2022. This should also make specific reference to how decisions are made and how non-committee Councillors can influence policy.

Given the nature of the rural economy within the area there could be enhanced arrangements to consider more rural issues such as agriculture and fishing.

Further consideration to be given to:

- the retention of the reports for noting section on Agendas.
- the scale / remit of the Community Services Committee including the possibility of a separate Education Committee or Audit and Scrutiny taking on the role of scrutiny of Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue and the Argyll and Bute Health and Social Care Partnership (Integrated Joint Board).
- more presentations to Council for scrutiny as in previous political management arrangements.

Area Committees (Questions 3 & 4)

Recognition that while Business Days are not decision making meetings the discussions had are useful.

Opportunities for increased local Scrutiny and enhanced responsibilities such as participatory budgeting.

Further consideration to be given to possible synergies between Area Committees and other groups, such as Area Community Planning Groups and HSCP Locality Planning Groups.

Future Arrangements (Questions 5 to 9)

Consideration of Executive Leadership Team providing updates at Area Committee Business Days and management of public question issues at area committees.

(Ref: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Legal and Regulatory Support dated December 2021, submitted)

5. NEXT STEPS

The Short Life Working Group noted that Officers would produce a first draft of a report which would be the main item of business of discussion at the next meeting on 25 January 2022.

ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL

COUNCIL

LEGAL AND REGULATORY SUPPORT

APRIL/MAY 2022

**RECOMMENDATIONS FROM SHORT LIFE WORKING GROUP ON POLITICAL
MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS**

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Council, at the meeting held on 30 September 2021, endorsed a Best Practice review of current Political Management Arrangements and agreed to establish of a Short Life Working Group (SLWG) which would review the current arrangements and work to make recommendation(s) to a new Council following the Local Government Elections in May 2022 regarding this matter.
- 1.2 This report provides an outline of the work undertaken by the Short Life Working Group, and highlights the areas which have been taken into consideration during the discussions.

ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL

COUNCIL

LEGAL AND REGULATORY SUPPORT

APRIL 2022

**RECOMMENDATIONS FROM SHORT LIFE WORKING GROUP ON POLITICAL
MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS**

2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 This report provides Council with recommendations from the Short Life Working Group on Political Management Arrangements for consideration.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Council agrees to refer the findings of the Short Life Working Group to the first meeting of the new Council for consideration.

4.0 DETAIL

4.1 The Council, at the meeting held on 30 September 2021, endorsed a Best Practice review of current Political Management Arrangements and agreed to establish of a Short Life Working Group (SLWG) which would review the current arrangements and work to make recommendation(s) to a new Council following the Local Government Elections in May 2022 regarding this matter.

4.2 Work of the Short Life Working Group

4.2.1 The SLWG met on * occasions and considered a wide variety of information. At the first meeting of the Group, Members reflected on the fundamental principles determined by the Council in September 2021, which informed discussion on different options and types of Committee models, specifically:-

- a) Stability in political management arrangements.
- b) Clear strategic direction to deliver on Single Outcome Agreement.
- c) The development of clear and sustainable policies.
- d) An inclusive Council.
- e) Positive Culture.
- f) Constructive working relationships across all Elected Members.
- g) Members focus on addressing challenges and identifying opportunities.
- h) Good reputation.
- i) Leadership.
- j) Effective political scrutiny.
- k) Effective decision making.
- l) Focus on all our customers.
- m) Achieving our ambition.
- n) Future proofing.

These basic principles informed the discussion on the different types of Committee models.

4.3 Consultation

4.3.1 Following the first meeting of the SLWG, a consultation was undertaken across all 36 Elected Members asking them to provide feedback on the current Political Management Arrangements and to make suggestions as to what any future structure should look like. A number of responses were received with general comments and suggestions which were subsequently discussed by the Working Group. Some of the key messages from the consultation are as follows:

- General agreement that the existing arrangements work well, with all Members offered opportunities to be involved in the democratic process, rather than Cabinet or Executive models.
- Strategic committees could meet more regularly with smaller agendas for in-depth discussion on topics that if properly discussed could result in better outcomes for constituents.
- Members were generally content with the existing arrangements for Area Committees, with some suggesting enhancements to Area Committees' responsibilities.

4.4 Committee Structures

4.4.1 The Group also considered other Committee models, specifically Traditional, Cabinet and Executive. Officers provided information on these models, including which models were in place across Scotland with particular interest being placed on Authorities with similar geography to Argyll and Bute. It was noted that the position across Scotland varies and that in those Authorities which most closely align with Argyll and Bute the majority operate a Traditional Committee model. A short description of each model is provided below:-

4.4.2 **Traditional Committee model**

This is the type of system currently in place within Argyll and Bute Council. The traditional system delegates authority to a number of Committees to make those decisions which are not reserved for the Council. The membership of these Committees is reflective of the political balance of the Council and can allow for a geographical balance to be maintained. It also allows for a significant portion of Council business to be undertaken using the delegation to Committees.

4.4.3 **Cabinet model**

In this model, a small group of elected members from the Administration and with Portfolio/Policy remits make the day-to-day decisions within a policy framework set by the council as a whole. The Cabinet would meet on a regular basis, with those Members who are not part of the Cabinet being involved in providing a robust scrutiny function. There would be no requirement for service Committees, there would be less Committees overall,

but meetings of the Cabinet would be more frequent than current Committee schedules. This model would provide stability and strategic direction but would not provide political balance, nor would it involve all members in decision making.

4.4.4 **Executive model**

The Executive model is similar to the Cabinet model, but the Executive generally has membership from both administration and opposition councillors. The Executive would meet on a regular basis and there would again be a robust scrutiny process in place. In this model there would be no requirement for service Committees and there would be less Committees overall. This model can be seen as more efficient and can provide political balance whilst providing a greater opportunity for strategic direction. It may be seen as less democratic and as offering less involvement for all members in the business of the Council.

4.5 Other areas of consideration

4.5.1 **Strategic Committees & Audit and Scrutiny arrangements**

There was general consensus that the number of and general responsibilities' of Strategic Committers should continue, but that consideration should be given to their remits and meeting frequency. Specifically the scale / remit of the Community Services Committee and whether:

- a separate Education Committee would be appropriate; and
- the Audit and Scrutiny Committee should take responsibility for the scrutiny of Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue and the Argyll and Bute Health and Social Care Partnership (Integrated Joint Board) and a request for more detailed scrutiny related presentations to Council.

4.5.2 **Area Committees & Area Community Planning**

Members were in agreement that consideration should be given to possible synergies between Area Committees and other groups, such as Area Community Planning Groups and Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) Locality Planning Groups while recognising the statutory nature of these Groups.

The general consensus was that Members wanted to retain the current Area Committee arrangements but with opportunities for increased local scrutiny and enhanced responsibilities. There was also a suggestion that a review be undertaken with regards to the management of issues arising from public questions at Area Committees.

They also considered Area Committee Business Days, with there being broad agreement that while these meetings do not involve decision making they are useful. The SLWG were of the view that these should continue with consideration being given to members of the Executive Leadership Team providing scheduled updates at Area Committee Business Days.

4.5.3 Regulatory Committee arrangements

The Members of the Group gave consideration to the current structure and there was general agreement that the Planning, Protective Services and Licensing Committee (PPSL) arrangements which are in place at the moment work well. There was a consensus view that these arrangements should continue.

4.5.4 Reports for Noting

The Reports for Noting section on committee agendas was introduced following the last review of the Political Management Arrangements and has helped to provide a more streamlined structure which in turn provided a more effective, open and transparent basis for decision making. While there was some concern regarding the lack of opportunity for discussion on these reports, it was acknowledged that these issues could be raised through normal processes at the next meeting of the committee. The group also acknowledged that this approach allowed for valuable information to be made available to members and the public.

4.5.5 Rural Economy

SLWG acknowledged the unique nature of Argyll and Bute, specifically the importance of the rural economy and its economic development. While the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee has responsibility for these areas it was felt that there would be value in developing enhanced arrangements to consider more rural issues.

4.5.6 Participation of Elected Members

The SLWG acknowledged that increased participation from all members enriches policy discussion. Encouraging attendance of non-committee Councillors is to be included within the Members induction programme following Local Government Elections scheduled for May 2022. This will also make specific reference to how decisions are made and how non-committee Councilors' can influence policy.

4.5.7 Programme of Meetings 2022/2023

Officers have prepared a draft timetable for meetings in 2022/2023 following on from the Local Government Elections (Appendix 1), which follows the existing Traditional Committee model. The timetable which has been produced for consideration can be supported using the available resource within Governance.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 This report provides Council with an overview of the work of the Short Life Working Group on Political Management Arrangements. It outlines the discussions which have taken place and the information which has been taken

into consideration. The Working Group provides information contained in this report to allow the new Council to make a reasoned decision in terms of future Political Management Arrangements, and provides a draft schedule of meetings which could be implemented by officers as soon as it is agreed.

5.2 In summary, the Short Life Working Group have come to the following conclusions:-

- There are 3 models for Committee Structures which could be adopted, and while it will be for the new Council to consider which model, the existing Traditional Model is considered to be the most inclusive and has served the Council effectively.
- There was general consensus that the number of and general responsibilities' of Strategic Committers should continue, but that consideration should be given to their remits and meeting frequency.
- The Planning, Protective Services and Licensing Committee (PPSL) arrangements which are in place at the moment work well and would commend these to a new Council for incorporation in their preferred model of Political Management Arrangements.
- Area Committees should be retained with future consideration being given to increased local scrutiny arrangements and enhanced responsibilities.
- Further consideration should be given to possible synergies between Area Committees and other groups, such as Area Community Planning Groups and Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) Locality Planning Groups while recognising the statutory nature of these Groups.
- Enhancing key areas of the rural economy such as agriculture and fishing within specified committee remits.
- Support for all Elected Members, irrespective of Committee membership, to participate in discussion and influence policy direction, is key to driving change and improvement.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Policy – none at this stage.

6.2 Financial – meeting schedules outlined in this report can be supported using existing financial resources.

6.3 Legal – none at this stage.

6.4 HR – none at present, but may have HR implications dependent on the agreement made by the new Council.

6.5 Fairer Scotland Duty – none

6.5.1 Equalities – protect characteristics – none

6.5.2 Socio-economic Duty – none

6.5.3 Islands – none

6.6 Climate change – none

6.7 Risk - none

6.8 Customer Service - none

Members of the Short Life Working Group on Political Management Arrangements

Councillor Robin Currie (Chair)

Councillor Audrey Forrest

Councillor George Freeman

Councillor Kieron Green

Councillor Jim Lynch

Councillor Liz McCabe

Councillor Yvonne McNeilly (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Aileen Morton

Councillor Sandy Taylor

Councillor Andrew Vennard

Douglas Hendry

Executive Director with responsibility for Legal and Regulatory Support

**** January 2022**

Policy Lead: Councillor Mary Jean Devon

For further information contact: Stuart McLean, Committee Manager, 01436 658717

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Draft timetable of meetings

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Schedule of Committee Meetings

Committee	2022							2023						
	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July
Council	Thurs 30			Thurs 29		Thurs 24			Thurs 23		Thurs 27		Thurs 29	
Policy & Resources			Thurs 11		Thurs 13		Thurs 8		Thurs 16			Thurs 11		
Community Services	Thurs 9		Thurs 25				Thurs 15			Thurs 9			Thurs 8	
Env, Dev & Infrastructure *Harbour Brd	Thurs 2			*Thurs 1			Thurs 1			*Thurs 2			Thurs 1	
PPSL	Wed 22		Wed 24	Wed 21	Wed 19	Wed 23	Wed 21	Wed 18	Wed 15	Wed 23	Wed 19	Wed 24	Wed 21	
Audit & Scrutiny	Tues 14			Tues 13			Tues 13			Tues 14			Tues 13	
B&C Area 1 st Tues	Tues 7			Tues 6			Tues 6			Tues 7			Tues 6	
B&C CPG 1 st Tues			Tues 16			Tues 1			Tues 7			Tues 2		
MAKI Area 1 st Wed	Wed 1			Wed 7			Wed 7			Wed 1			Wed 7	
MAKI CPG 1 st Wed			Wed 31			Wed 2			Wed 1			Wed 3		
H&L Area 3 rd Thurs	Thurs 16			Thurs 15			Thurs 22 or Fri 16			Thurs 16			Thurs 15	
H&L CPG 3 rd Thurs			Thurs 18			Thurs 17			Thurs 9			Thurs 18		
OLI Area 2 nd Wed	Wed 8			Wed 14			Wed 14			Wed 8			Wed 14	
OLI CPG 2 nd Wed			Wed 17			Wed 9			Wed 8			Wed 10		
IJB	Wed			Wed		Wed		Wed		Wed			Wed	
CPP/Mgt Comm														
Licensing Board	Tues			Tues		Tues	Tues		Tues		Tues		Tues	
Seminars														

Dates highlighted red out with normal pattern to School Holidays.

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SHORT LIFE WORKING GROUP ON POLITICAL MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

Consideration of Rural Issues within Other Local Authorities

Briefing note

Introduction

During discussions at the Short Life Working group on Political Management Arrangements held on 22 December 2022 members acknowledged the unique nature of Argyll and Bute, specifically the importance of the rural economy and its economic development. While the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee has responsibility for these areas it was felt that there would be value in developing enhanced arrangements to consider more rural issues.

This short briefing note outlines the arrangements that other Authorities have in place to consider rural issues.

Highland ([LINK](#))

All 7 Strategic Committees have responsibility to 'consider the impact of decisions on communities, specifically taking into consideration the issues of equality, poverty and rurality.'

Western Isles ([LINK](#))

The Sustainable Development Committee has the responsibility for the conservation and enhancement of the countryside and the provision of amenities and facilities within the countryside and the conservation of the fauna and flora of the area and the the promotion of the general industrial, commercial, environmental, fishing and crofting development of the area.

Western Isles also have a Fisheries and Crofting Joint Consultative Committees which are tasked with advising the Council in its consideration of all matters pertaining to the conservation and development of the fishing and crofting industries.

Aberdeenshire Council ([LINK](#))

No specific reference to 'rural economy' but has a Sustainability Committee which promotes awareness of the need for sustainability within the Council and wider community of Aberdeenshire.

Dumfries and Galloway Council ([LINK](#))

No specific reference to 'rural economy' but has Economy and Resources Committee that acts as the reporting Committee for People and Transformation, Economy and Development, and the Assessor and Electoral Registration.

Scottish Borders Council ([LINK](#))

Executive committee has responsibility for providing strategic leadership and vision for Economic Development, developing and overseeing the delivery of economic development plans. No specific reference to 'rural economy'.

South Ayrshire Council ([LINK](#))

Seven members of the Leadership Panel from the Administration parties have been allocated a special area of responsibility (Portfolio), of which Economy and Culture Portfolio is one. No specific reference to 'rural economy'.

South Lanarkshire ([LINK](#))

Has a Rural Task Force, which has the responsibility for, among other things, to:

- identify and drive forward new rural development initiatives as part of an agreed 4 year Rural Task Force (RTF) Action Plan in support of the recently approved SLRP rural strategy.
- undertake regular reviews of the distinctive economic, environmental, cultural and other needs of rural South Lanarkshire.
- advise the Executive Committee of any special measures which may be necessary or desirable to meet such needs and to promote the interests of rural communities.

Perth and Kinross ([LINK](#))

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee exercises the functions of the Council in relation to economic development, no other reference to 'rural economy'.