

**MINUTES of MEETING of SHORT LIFE WORKING GROUP ON POLITICAL MANAGEMENT
ARRANGEMENTS held via MICROSOFT TEAMS
on TUESDAY, 30 NOVEMBER 2021**

Present: Councillor Robin Currie (Chair)

Councillor Audrey Forrest	Councillor Yvonne McNeilly
Councillor George Freeman	Councillor Aileen Morton
Councillor Kieron Green	Councillor Sandy Taylor
Councillor Jim Lynch	Councillor Andrew Vennard
Councillor Liz McCabe	

Attending: Douglas Hendry – Executive Director of Customer Services
Kirsty Flanagan – Executive Director of Development & Infrastructure Services
David Logan – Head of Legal and Regulatory Support
Tricia O’Neill – Governance Manager
Stuart McLean – Committee Manager

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of the Chief Executive.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest intimated.

3. SLWG - POLITICAL MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The Short Life Working Group considered a report which outlined the proposed timetable and process for the review of Political Management Arrangements (PMAs).

Discussion focussed on the effectiveness of the current PMA and the general consensus was that it worked well and was a good balance but relies on Councillors participating fully in meetings in order to be effective. Other structures were discussed, there was general agreement that that whilst a cabinet structure may promote stability it may not promote inclusion as a large number of councillors would be excluded from the decision making process and unable to represent their constituents. Members raised a number of points for consideration and discussion at future meetings including:

- The SLWG is tasked with making a recommendation to the Council to pass to the new Council following the Local Government Elections in May 2022. While it is for the new Council to decide what PMA’s it wishes to have it would be prudent to establish options for consideration and to set out the key considerations for each, it was a matter of discussion and agreement that the current arrangements work well and are balanced. There is no clear justification or material reason to alter.
- Members recognised the council’s duty to initiate, facilitate and maintain community planning. However, the existing area structures, i.e. Area Community Planning Groups (CPGs), effectiveness in bringing about change through collaborative working with partners was questioned. Members gave some consideration to whether it would be beneficial to have an East/West split rather than meetings being broken down into the four administrative areas.

- The powers afforded to Area Committees was raised and whether Area CPG's might be incorporated within the remit for Area Committee's. While members noted that CPGs were not made up wholly of democratically elected members, unlike Area Committees it was agreed that this matter should be considered further as a potential option.
- Consideration was given to Ward Forums which were not committees but had previously served to facilitate greater participation by constituents in local issues. Members recalled that having a governance contact for their area was helpful, however the effectiveness of Ward Forums varied across the areas.
- Any change to the existing PMAs must maintain the balance between allowing officers to make decisions while ensuring Councillors' authority and accountability to the electorate is recognised.
- Future PMAs should have regard to what works well for the Council areas and should not be determined solely by resource implications.
- Any new structure should facilitate and encourage the key principles set out in the report and also ensure an overall cohesive approach between committees.

Members further discussed the benefits of the SLWG to have sight of the questions prior to them being circulated to all Councillors with the feedback to be reported to the next meeting of the SLWG.

Decision

The Short Life Working Group:

- a) noted the basic principles for the review of the Political Management Arrangements;
- b) agreed the attached timetable for the review and associated reporting arrangements, with a final report being submitted to the meeting of Council in April 2022;
- c) considered the Political Management Arrangements adopted by other Scottish Local Authorities; and
- d) agreed that officers engage with all 36 Elected Members seeking their views on how the current Political Management Arrangements are working, asking for suggestions in terms of any future amendments.

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