

REPORT TO PROCEDURES COMMITTEE – 21st APRIL 2021

FORWARD PLAN - UPDATE

1 Reason for Report / Summary

- 1.1 This report invites the Committee to consider the updates to the Procedures Committee Forward Plan at Appendix 1 and agree the revised timetable for future business.

2 Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 **Note the updates to the items on the Forward Plan agreed by Committee on 5 February 2020;**
- 2.2 **Comment on the proposed scope of the review of scrutiny arrangements following the Best Value Review at paragraph 4.7 of this report; and**
- 2.3 **Consider and agree the revised Forward Plan at Appendix 1.**

3 Purpose and Decision Making Route

- 3.1 The Procedures Committee has the remit to consider any proposed changes to the Council's Scheme of Governance and to make recommendations regarding amendments to any other formal procedures of the Council. At its meeting on 5 February 2020 the Committee agreed a Forward Plan which identified future and ongoing work which would be reported to Committee at a future date. It was noted that Committee would receive updates on progress with the actions identified in the plan at future meetings.
- 3.2 On 25 June 2020 Full Council agreed to transfer the remit of the Procedures Committee to the Recovery Reference Group to address an identified need for Elected Member oversight of the Council's recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. Due to the impact of the pandemic on Council resources the majority of the items on the Forward Plan were not progressed. The Recovery Reference Group was dis-established by Full Council on 14 January 2021 and the remit returned to Procedures Committee. Updates have therefore been provided with a revised timetable for approval by this Committee.

Discussion

- 4.1 The Forward Plan identifying when in the year reports are likely to be coming forward to the Committee for consideration is attached at Appendix 1. Where actions have not been progressed, a revised timescale is proposed.

4.2 The Committee should note the following updates:-

Annual Review of the Scheme of Governance

4.3 The Annual Review of the Scheme of Governance was reported to the Recovery Reference Group at the end of 2020 and subsequently approved by Full Council at its meeting on 11 February 2021. The Forward Plan now includes timescales for the next Annual Review which officers will commence in summer 2021.

Scrutiny at Aberdeenshire

4.4 At its meeting on 5 February 2020 the Committee considered a report ([Item 6](#)) updating Members on a series of training sessions undertaken with both Councillors and Officers, which included feedback on both the training and the scrutiny process at Aberdeenshire. It was noted that officers within the Governance team would report back to the Committee at a future date with any proposed amendments to the Scrutiny at Aberdeenshire guidance at Part 4 of the Scheme of Governance, following consideration of the feedback received.

4.5 Since then a scrutiny toolkit has been developed on Arcadia, providing guidance and templates for officers undertaking the formal scrutiny process. At the same time guidance has been issued to Directors on the preparation of an Annual Scrutiny Report and an ALDO training course based on the sessions delivered to officers and Members in 2019 is also available.

4.6 The Best Value Report was reported to Full Council on 19 November 2020. The action plan arising from the report, which is now part of the Council's Corporate Improvement Plan, includes a review of the Council's scrutiny arrangements. Officers from Legal and People and Customer and Digital Services are currently developing a plan for the review, having regard to existing resources. On that basis a revised timetable is proposed, which aligns with the timescales set by the Corporate Improvement Plan.

4.7 The overall objective of the review in line with the recommendations in the Best Value report is to ensure that there is sufficient public scrutiny across the Council and that the scrutiny arrangements in place effectively support continuous improvement. The scope of the review will therefore include:-

- The structure of delegations in the Scheme of Governance in relation to scrutiny;
- The Scrutiny at Aberdeenshire Guidance in Part 4 of the Scheme of Governance, and in particular the three stage Committee Review Process;
- The training and support available for Elected Members and Officers in relation to their role in the scrutiny process;
- The opportunities for public scrutiny, including committee agendas, content of reports and appropriate use of formal vs informal methods.

- The programming of scrutiny work, and how this links to improved service delivery and continuous improvement.
- 4.8 The work will be undertaken over the summer recess with a report coming back to Procedures Committee in September with proposals for changes to the Scheme of Governance, if required.

Policy Development and Review Framework

- 4.9 The review of the Policy Development and Review Framework has been on hold since June last year following a reprioritization of resources within the Customer and Digital Services team in response to the pandemic. It is however proposed to move forward with the review over the summer and report back to this Committee in September 2021 with any proposed amendments to the current framework.

Review of Planning Delegations

- 4.10 An additional item has been added to the Plan in respect of the review of Planning Delegations at Part 2C of the Scheme of Governance. The Committee will consider a separate report at this meeting regarding the scope of that review, which will be reported to Full Council as part of the next Annual Review.

Expenditure Approval Process Project

- 4.11 Whilst not an item on the Forward Plan, the Expenditure Approval Process Project has previously been reported to the Procedures Committee. The last update received was on 6 September 2019 ([Item 7](#)), at which point work had progressed in developing a timeline for the project and a conceptual proposal known as the “Budget Wheel”, with the next step being engagement with Elected Members.
- 4.12 However the impact of Covid-19 on resources coupled with the departure of the Project Leader to another role has meant that it has not been possible to progress the project any further. Some elements of the project, such as the introduction of an electronic solution for the procurement approval process, will still be progressed as an identified operational need however the future of the project as a whole remains unclear at the stage due to a lack of resources and reprioritisation of work. The EAPP Project Board is due to meet to discuss the future of the project on 28 April, 2021 and Officers will report back to this Committee thereafter to confirm the position. In the meantime, any interim changes required to the Financial Regulations can be picked up as part of the review of the Scheme of Governance later this year.
- 4.13 It may be that other topics and reports will arise throughout the year, in which case officers will update the Plan and submit a revised version to the Committee for approval.

5 Council Priorities, Implications and Risk

- 5.1 The report helps deliver all six Strategic Priorities by ensuring the underlying key principle of “right people, right place, right time”.
- 5.2 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendation(s) is(are) agreed.

| Subject | Yes | No | N/A |
|--|-----|----|-----|
| Financial | | X | |
| Staffing | X | | |
| Equalities | | x | |
| Fairer Scotland Duty | | x | |
| Town Centre First | | x | |
| Sustainability | | x | |
| Children and Young People’s Rights and Wellbeing | | x | |

- 5.4 An equality impact assessment is not required because the purpose of the report is to approve a plan for Committee business. Any proposals for changes to the Scheme of Governance arising from the actions in the Plan will be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment if required.
- 5.5 There are staffing implications arising from taking forward the actions in the Plan. At present it is considered that these can be met from existing resources within the proposed timescales, however this will be kept under review.
- 5.6 The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level: ACORP002 Changes in government policy, legislation and Regulation; and ACORP004 Business and organisational change (including: ensuring governance structures support change; and, managing the pace of change). The Council needs to be assured that it has a governance structure that reflects and serves well the communities whose priorities it is here to deliver, which can be achieved through regular review of the delegations and guidance in the Scheme of Governance to ensure it is up to date and fit for purpose.

6 Scheme of Governance

- 6.1 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.

6.2 The Committee is able to consider this item as Full Council appointed the Procedures Committee on May 18th, 2017. The established remit of the Committee is to consider proposed changes to Aberdeenshire Council's Scheme of Governance and to make recommendations about required amendments.

RITCHIE JOHNSON
DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS SERVICES

Report prepared by Ruth O'Hare, Acting Legal Service Manager (Governance)
Date 8 April 2021

List of Appendices –
Appendix 1 – Forward Plan

APPENDIX 1
PROCEDURES COMMITTEE – FORWARD PLAN

| ACTION | OWNER | TIMESCALE |
|--|--|--|
| Annual Review of the Scheme of Governance | Head of Legal and People | September 2021 (Procedures Committee) November 2021/January 2022 (Full Council) |
| Scrutiny at Aberdeenshire review | Head of Legal and People | September 2021 (Procedures Committee) |
| Review of Policy Review and Development Framework | Head of Customer and Digital Services | Review to commence Summer 2021 |
| Expenditure Approval Process Project - Update | Director of Business Services | September 2021 - further update to Procedures Committee on future of project |
| Review of Planning Delegations | Head of Legal and People Head of Planning and Environment | September 2021 (Procedures Committee) November 2021/January 2022 (Full Council) |