

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE:	Council
DATE:	6 March 2013
DIRECTOR:	Stewart Carruth
TITLE OF REPORT:	Roles and Responsibilities : Is Aberdeen City Council Getting It Right?
REPORT NUMBER:	CG/13/027

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report makes recommendations on the way forward and proposes areas for further consideration arising from the decisions of the Audit and Risk Committee on the self-evaluation project which had been undertaken on the roles and responsibilities of elected members and officers; in addition, it proposes that further consideration be given to the establishment of a Petitions Committee as agreed at Council on 19th December, 2012.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that Council:-

- (i) instructs that a questionnaire be issued to all members on any changes they would wish to see to the Council's democratic processes;
- (ii) establishes a small working group to consider (a) any detailed proposals to change the committee structure, Standing Orders and the Scheme of Delegation, reporting to Council in June, 2013; and (b) the introduction of a Petitions Committee;
- (iii) notes the current report template;
- (iv) notes that Council officers are required to advise any member or group at any time upon request, and otherwise notes the draft guidance on when it is appropriate for members to contact officers, which will be finalised after further consultation with officers;
- (v) notes the training programme for members put in place following the May, 2012 elections and the completion of training for members appointed to outside bodies;
- (vi) notes the draft Media and Communications Strategy; and
- (vii) approves the diary to December, 2014 in principle, subject to confirmation when the Working Group reports back to Council in June, 2013.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There will be minor financial implications associated with implementing the recommendations contained in this report, for example associated with re-printing Standing Orders, the Orders of Reference and the Scheme of Delegation associated with any committee restructuring. Other implications may ensue in the event of significant changes to the committee structure, etc.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no legal, personnel or other implications arising from this report.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

- 5.1 In August, 2010, Audit Scotland produced a report entitled “Roles and Working Relationships – Are You Getting It Right?” which set out strengths and areas for development in Scottish councils. Audit Scotland co-ordinates scrutiny of each council through a Local Area Network (LAN) and in the initial risk assessment for Aberdeen City Council the LAN reported that the Council was taking steps to improve and strengthen its political leadership and governance arrangements including actions to address previously identified weaknesses in scrutiny and challenge. In the update assessment produced in 2011, the LAN reported that important improvements had been identified but that there were still some areas requiring further development. Whilst the Council’s political arrangements were improving, they remained volatile; particular reference was made to the need to improve member/officer relations to create a position of mutual trust and respect founded on a clear understanding of the distinctive roles that officers and members played within the Council. As part of the Council’s response to this report, a self-evaluation project was undertaken by a former Inspector of Her Majesty’s Inspectorate for Education and this was reported to the Audit and Risk Committee on 25th September, 2012 (Article 11 of the minute of meeting refers).
- 5.2 The Roles and Responsibilities report which had been commissioned made ten recommendations to Council. Eight of these were approved by the Audit and Risk Committee, namely that the Council (1) provide advice for elected members about communication with officers; (2) ensure that all committee members were fully briefed before meetings; (3) review and agree the most effective structure of reports to committees; (4) review the committee structure, particular to broaden scrutiny; (5) customise training for Councillors about serving on outside bodies; (6) draw up a media and communication strategy; (7) improve the scheme of training for Councillors; and (8) review the Scheme of Delegation and Standing Orders. The Audit and Risk Committee did not approve two recommendations - it agreed that no decision would be taken on a proposal to supplement the existing Councillors’ Code of Conduct with an Aberdeen City Council Code of Conduct but to monitor the implementation of the other recommendations and other aspects of the report over the coming year with a view to accepting that a Code of Conduct for Aberdeen City Council would be unnecessary if these were implemented successfully. On that basis, the Committee also agreed not to approve a recommendation to base training for Councillors on a supplementary Code of Conduct.

- 5.3 In addition, Council agreed at its meeting of 19th December, 2012:-
“Council acknowledges that a Public Petitions Committee is a commitment of the Coalition partners and the Liberal Democrats, which requires to be acted upon within the lifetime of this Council. Agrees that officers be instructed to bring forward to the March 2013 meeting of Council proposals for changes to the way in which Council currently operates including any proposals for a Public Petitions Committee.”
- 5.4 Proposals to implement each of the above decisions are set out individually below:-
- 5.4.1 Advice to members on communication with officers:- a number of protocols or guidance documents which are already in place include advice to members on when they should consult officers, for example, the protocol for the consultation of Councillors on draft reports, Standing Orders, the Councillors’ Code of Conduct and the flow chart on members’ enquiries. However, there is no single document which covers the issues now proposed and, accordingly, attached at Appendix A is a draft guidance document for consideration.
- 5.4.2 Briefing of committee members before meetings:- Annexe C to the Councillors’ Code of Conduct, the Protocol for Relations Between Councillors and Employees in Scottish Councils, is quite clear that employees may properly be called upon to assist the deliberation of political groups and also to help individual members in their different roles. It is for the Chief Executive and senior officers of each Council to have ultimate responsibility to ensure that the Council’s responsibilities are implemented. On this basis, briefings for committee members are always available for those who want them; briefings are always available to individual members or to groups.
- 5.4.3 The report template for a standard committee report is attached as Appendix B; in addition, there are variations of this template for exempt reports, data protected reports, draft reports, business cases and information bulletin reports. The format was amended this year to require authors to provide additional emphasis on the impact of the report’s proposals, including the need for Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessments, and to take account of the decision of the Corporate Policy and Performance Committee (27th September, 2012, Article 5 of the minute refers) on the notice of motion by Councillor Boulton, that risks pertaining to recommendations be highlighted in an additional section in the report. Guidance for authors on completing these templates correctly is included in an online interactive learning course on the Zone, as well as on the Committee Services pages.
- 5.4.4 Committee Structure:- last year, Democratic Services officers undertook an appraisal of alternative committee structures and consulted other authorities using different systems on the benefits and perceived disbenefits of these. If members are minded to undertake a detailed

review of the committee structure, it is suggested that a working group be established to investigate options in more detail. The introduction of a Petitions Committee is discussed in more detail below.

- 5.4.5 Training for Councillors on Outside Bodies:- this training was provided on 18th June, 2012.
- 5.4.6 Media and Communications Strategy:- a draft of this prepared by the Media Team Manager is attached at Appendix C.
- 5.4.7 Improve Scheme of Training for Councillors:- following the elections in May, 2012, a detailed training programme for members was introduced. This is overseen by the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development and is attached at Appendix D.
- 5.4.8 Review Scheme of Delegation and Standing Orders:- these reviews would follow automatically upon any review of the committee structure and reported to Council for approval.
- 5.4.9 Petitions Committee:- several councils operate Petitions Committees, either as stand-alone committees or with the function incorporated into the work of others (two councils undertake the function through a Scrutiny Committee, one council through its Community Safety, Public Engagement and Equalities Committee). Attached at Appendix E are summary sheets for each council which already has, or is in the process of establishing, a Petitions Committee which illustrate some differences in the way that the committees operate. The rules applying to the acceptance of petitions are broadly similar, petitions not being accepted on matters which are subjudice, relate to employment matters, individual members of staff, housing cases, planning or licensing matters, matters with their own appeal procedures etc or if they relate to decisions taken within the previous six months or have the same subject matter as petitions considered within the previous twelve months.

The numbers required to validate a petition also vary – some councils only require one resident or a representative of one business to sign, and these may be validated by a community council officer or a local member. The City of Edinburgh Council, however, which has yet to introduce its committee, has proposed that at least 500 residents or representatives of 20 businesses on the valuation role are required, although the convener would have the discretion to accept a petition with greater than 250 valid signatures.

All committees operate in a broadly similar fashion, in that a decision will firstly be taken as to whether the petition can be accepted and, if so, the petitioner will be invited to address the committee. Thereafter, the committee may decide to take no action, to refer the petition to a director or to another committee, or to refer the petition to another outside body. The number of members sitting on a petitions committee varies, often depending upon whether the petitions function is associated with another

committee or is stand-alone. In view of the varied nature of petitions committees across Scotland, it is recommended that further discussion take place at the working group to be established to address the committee structures.

5.4.10 Diary:- a diary for the period to December, 2014 is attached at Appendix F and Council is asked to approve this, in principle, pending any changes which the working group on committee structures may recommend to the June meeting of Council. Members will note that the Audit and Risk Committee has been moved to the end of each committee cycle, and that in June 2014 it is proposed to meet the day after Council. This is intended to take cognisance of the recommendation by Audit Scotland in its annual report on the 2011/12 Audit (paragraph 79) that the Audit and Risk Committee should make arrangements to consider the Council's annual accounts in June. Last year, the annual accounts were considered by Council in June and were not referred to the Audit and Risk Committee until September. Council may also wish to arrange a single issue meeting of Audit and Risk to be held after the June 2013 meeting of Council purely to consider the annual accounts. This document has been amended to take account of feedback following consultation with group leaders.

5.5 In light of the above, it is proposed that the establishment of a small, short life working group would be a prudent way forward at this time. Members will be able to discuss the responses to the questionnaire on committee structures, in addition to proposals by officers for changes to the Standing Orders and the Scheme of Delegation.

6. IMPACT

6.1 The governance issues addressed in this report arise from work undertaken in conjunction with or proposed by Audit Scotland which, taken as a whole, should lead to an improvement in the governance and decision making processes of the Council as a result of members being better trained and better informed with a clearer understanding of the relationship between the role of members and the role of officers. Such clarity should lead to a better understanding of the Council's work by the public and improve the transparency of democratic processes in the city.

7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

The recommendations in the report address the risks previously identified in the report produced by consultants, “Roles and Responsibilities – Is Aberdeen City Council Getting It Right?”

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Roles and working relationships – Are You Getting It Right?, Audit Scotland, August, 2010

Roles and Responsibilities – Is Aberdeen City Council Getting It Right? January, 2012

Shared Risk Assessment, Aberdeen City Council, Audit Scotland, 2010/11, 2011/12

Roles and Responsibilities – Is Aberdeen City Council Getting It Right? – Report to Audit and Risk Committee, 25 September, 2012

8. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

Roderick MacBeath
Senior Democratic Services Manager
Email rmacbeath@aberdeencity.gov.uk
Tel (01224) 523054

Guidance for Members in Contacting Officers

The Councillors' Code of Conduct and the Council's Standing Orders set out some instances of when it is appropriate for councillors to contact senior staff. This guidance document provides further examples in general terms, but is not exhaustive and does not address the specific roles of senior councillors.

It is appropriate for councillors to contact officers in the following instances:-

- to discuss a matter relating to the role of one of the Council's statutory officers;
- to discuss or make senior officers aware of major issues;
- to discuss draft motions or amendments or other proposals to be presented at Council or committees, etc and their implications and to assist with the political deliberations of groups or individual members (in terms of the Protocol for Relations between Councillors and Employees in Scottish Councils, which forms Annex C to the Councillors' Code of Conduct);
- to discuss complaints made by constituents about services;
- to discuss draft notices of motion (in terms of Standing Order 21(1));
- to discuss or seek advice on matters relating to a member's register of interest, making a declaration, seeking a dispensation etc (in terms of the Councillors' Code of Conduct);
- to discuss the appropriateness of accepting of gifts or hospitality, particularly if this is repeated (in terms of the Councillors' Code of Conduct); or
- to discuss a role on an outside body to which the Council has made appointments.

It is appropriate for members to contact report authors:-

- in response to consultation on draft reports or to seek information about particular proposals or recommendations contained therein (in terms of Standing Order 45(7); or
- to make them aware of particular local issues which may have a bearing on their draft report and about which they may be unaware.

Members can approach other staff in the following circumstances:-

- where the staff are providing a service directly to members, for example, the Members Support Team, the Travel Team, Pensions Team, Payroll, HR Advisers providing members training, Committee Services officers, etc.

It is not appropriate to contact officers or authors in respect of:-

- enquiries about constituency matters which should be pursued through the Members Enquiries scheme operated through Members Support; adherence to this requirement is being monitored by CMT which instructed in December, 2012, that all members be reminded of the need to follow this;
- Seeking support in relation to political or campaigning matters (which is prohibited by legislation); or
- Seeking to influence officers in the preparation and giving of professional advice or the undertaking of their operational roles.

Appendix B

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	*
DATE	*
DIRECTOR	*
TITLE OF REPORT	*
REPORT NUMBER:	eg OCE/11/002

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This section should provide a brief overview of the purpose of the report.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

*

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

This section should identify revenue and capital implications for current and future years, any financial risk arising from the project and any State Aid implications. It should identify the proposed source of funding.

If there are any implications for approved PBB options, please specify here what they are and which options are affected.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

This section must include any legal, resource, personnel, property, equipment, sustainability and environmental, health and safety and/or policy implications.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

This section is the main body of the report, and should present background and where appropriate, a business case, for your recommendations.

6. IMPACT

Corporate - This section should include links to the Community Plan, the Single Outcome Agreement, the 5 year Corporate Business Plan, and individual Service Plans.

Public - This section should outline to the reader whether this report is likely to be of interest to the public, and why that is. This should cover the Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EHRIA), if one has been required during completion of your report. If you have completed a EHRIA in writing your report, this must be included with the papers which are circulated to the Committee. Councillors and other decision-makers must actively consider the general equality duty when deciding whether to approve a new or revised policy or practice. Assessing impact is an important part of this, as reinforced by recent court cases, which have found that the duty to assess impact is mandatory and it must be fulfilled prior to taking the decision on the function or policy in question. The duty cannot be delegated – it must be considered by the person or persons with the ultimate responsibility for the policy or the service and for the decision to implement the policy.

7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Cross reference to “Risk Management and Decision Making”

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

List any papers which you consulted in the preparation of your report, if they include facts on which your report is based, and which have been relied upon to a material extent. It is a statutory requirement to list these, although you should not list papers which are confidential as defined by the Access to Information Act, or published works ie books or magazines.

9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

Name, job title, email address and phone number

Aberdeen City Council protocol on elected member and council officer quotes in media releases and statements

Introduction

Media releases and statements are issued several times a day by the Media Team to the local and national media in relation to Aberdeen City Council's functions, services and policies.

In general terms, media releases are issued proactively to publicise council achievements or service changes – indeed on any issue in which the City Council is involved which is deemed to be of public interest.

Stand-alone statements, meantime, are ordinarily issued reactively in response to specific media enquiries but are also, on occasions, issued proactively if it is judged that the council needs to comment upon an important or urgent issue.

A significant proportion of these releases and statements include attributed quotes from an elected member – in particular from the council leader, depute leader, committee conveners and vice-conveners – and/or from a senior official, primarily the Chief Executive or a director.

Releases/statements are also issued which include attributed quotes from heads of service, third and fourth-tier managers and other council officers.

Other releases and statements are issued by the Media Team on behalf of the council and are quoted in the media attributed simply to “an Aberdeen City Council spokesman/woman”.

This protocol seeks to explain the rationale which the Media Team employs when deciding:

- whether to quote an elected member, a council officer or both;
- the specific elected member and/or council official to quote;
- the seniority of the council official to be quoted;
- the use of quotes from external organisations;
- when to issue releases which carry no quotes;
- when to issue statements attributed to ‘an Aberdeen City Council spokesman/woman’.

Statute and guidance

Information issued by a local authority must abide by Section 2 of the Local Government Act 1986 and the separately published Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity [1988, updated 2001].

The Act defines “publicity” as “any communication, in whatever form, addressed to the public at large or to a section of the public”. The relevant paragraphs in the Act state:

“A local authority shall not publish any material which, in whole or in part, appears to be designed to affect public support for a political party. In determining whether material falls within the prohibition –

- a) regard shall be had to whether the material refers to a political party or to persons identified with a political party, and*
- b) where material is published as part of a campaign, regard shall be had to the effect which the campaign appears to be designed to achieve.”*

The Code, meantime, makes clear that decisions on issuing publicity must be “properly made in accordance with clear principles of good practice”. It states:

“Any publicity describing the council’s policies and aims should be as objective as possible, concentrating on facts or explanation or both.

“Where publicity is used to comment on, or respond to, the policies and proposals of central government, other local authorities or other public authorities, the comment or response should be objective, balanced, informative and accurate. It should aim to set out the reasons for the council’s views and should not be a prejudiced, unreasoning or political attack on the policies or proposals in question or on those putting them forward. Slogans alone will not be an adequate means of justifying or explaining the authority’s views or their policy decisions.

“Publicity relating to the provision of a service should concentrate on providing factual information about the service.

“Publicity touching on issues that are controversial, or on which there are arguments for and against the views or policies of the council, should be handled with particular care. It should not simplify the facts, issues or arguments.

“The functions of a local authority are discharged by the council corporately. It is therefore inappropriate for public resources to be used to publicise individual councillors.

“In the interests of public accountability, however, it may be appropriate to give publicity to the views or activities of individual members when they are representing the council as a whole: for example, when the chairman of a council speaks or acts as the first citizen of the whole community, or when the chairman of a committee opens a new scheme or launches a policy approved by the council or by his committee on the council’s behalf.

“A local authority may justifiably in certain circumstances issue press releases reporting statements made by individual members. Examples of cases where such press releases may be appropriate are as reports of the discussion at the meetings of the council or committees, or quotations of comments made by leading members of the council in response to particular events which call for a particularly speedy reaction from the council.”

The Code was updated in 2001 to include the following:

*“Publicity may include information about individual councillors’ proposals, decisions and recommendations only where this is relevant to their position and responsibilities within the Council. All such publicity should be **objective and explanatory, and whilst it may acknowledge the part played by individual councillors as holders of particular positions in the Council, personalisation of issues or personal image-making should be avoided.***

*“Publicity should not be, or liable to misrepresentation as being, party political. Whilst it may be appropriate to describe policies put forward by an individual councillor which are relevant to her/his position and responsibilities within the Council, and to put forward her/his justification in defence of them, **this should not be done in party political terms, using political slogans, expressly advocating policies of those of a political party or directly attacking policies and opinions of other parties, groups or individuals.***”

Quoting an elected member and/or council officer

A decision on whether a media release or a statement to the media requires a quote from an elected member, a council officer or both depends to a great extent upon the importance of the issue involved.

A further and crucial deciding factor on the selection of whether to quote an elected member and/or an officer of the council is a clear judgment of whether an issue is a matter of policy or an operational matter – or both.

Elected members are responsible for and accountable for the political/policy decisions they take. The City Council’s senior management team is responsible for and accountable for the delivery of those policies.

Media releases concerning policy decisions taken by elected members at full council and committee meetings will therefore generally require a quote from an elected member, specifically the council leader, depute leader or committee convener.

Media releases are sometimes issued by the Media Team on the substance of successful written motions from individual elected members to Full Council or committees which prompt the local authority to launch a specific, and perhaps creative, initiative or to take a particular course of action in terms of policy or service provision. On these occasions the mover of the successful motion should be afforded the opportunity to be quoted in any subsequent media release, he/she being the ‘author’ of

the idea and therefore deserving of recognition for having triggered, for example, the creation of a new event for the city, or a new statue or a novel approach to dealing with an issue.

Media releases detailing important operational decisions taken at officer level will generally require a quote from a senior official of the council.

The situation is, however, not always so clear-cut.

Major policy decisions by elected members which will generate specific operational issues, for example, will generally benefit from quotes from the council leader or the convener of a specific committee and the director who is responsible for that area of the council's operation.

Duthie Park wins Common Good funding [Apr 2011]

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/CouncilNews/ci_cns/pr_duthiecommongood_210411.asp

Finance and Resources convener quoted

Date set for city council by-election [Mar 2011]

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/CouncilNews/ci_cns/pr_dyceelection_150311.asp

Chief executive quoted

Care watchdog finds significant improvements in Aberdeen's social work services [Dec 2012]

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/CouncilNews/ci_cns/pr_socialcareinspec_201212.asp

Social Care and Wellbeing convener and director quoted

Selecting a specific elected member and/or council official

The choice of elected member and/or officer to be quoted rests largely on the nature of and significance of the information to be released to the media.

A major policy decision taken by elected members at committee or at full council concerning a particular aspect of the City Council's functions or duties is best covered with a media release quoting the specific convener with responsibility for that area of the council's work.

If that policy decision has major operational implications, it is reasonable to also quote the appropriate director.

Similarly, if a specific directorate has recorded significant operational successes founded upon policy decisions taken by elected members setting the priorities for that directorate, it is reasonable to quote both the appropriate committee convener and relevant director.

Significant improvements achieved within a service area of the council, however, which can be attributed not to 'political' policy decisions but purely and simply to operational excellence, warrant a quote from the appropriate director.

Spending plan agreed to create Scotland's first social work company [Sept 2011]

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/CouncilNews/ci_cns/pr_LATC_010911.asp

Social Care and Wellbeing Committee convener and director quoted

Council's Housing and Environment directorate reports another successful year [Jan 2012]

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/CouncilNews/ci_cns/pr_he_achievements_240112.asp

Housing and Environment convener and director quoted

Follow-through report notes positive progress by academy [Feb 2012]

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/CouncilNews/ci_cns/pr_NorthfieldAcademyreport_070212.asp

Education, Culture and Sport director quoted

Council approves Proposed Local Development Plan [Apr 2011]

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/CouncilNews/ci_cns/pr_localplan_270411.asp

Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure convener quoted

Judging the appropriate seniority of a quoted officer

Media releases concerning high-profile, strategic issues with wide-ranging operational implications clearly benefit from quotes from officers at the highest level in the council.

There are many occasions, however, when it is not appropriate to quote a senior council official.

It would appear disproportionate, for instance, to quote the head of a directorate in a release concerning a discrete issue concerning a specialised area of the council's functions – and the Media Team will, in these circumstances, regularly select an officer with specialist knowledge in a particular field to be quoted.

A media release detailing the clear-up operation following gale-force winds, for example, will benefit from a quote from an officer with professional expertise who is actively dealing with the weather-related problems 'on the ground'.

Similarly, a warning from the council to beware of fraudsters carries more authority if it includes a quote from a trading standards officer whose statements will be trusted by the public.

By the same token, a release concerning the launch of an exciting new exhibition at Aberdeen Art Gallery benefits from a quote from an arts professional in the council, explaining how the exhibition was curated.

Tree crews facing mammoth task [Dec 2011]

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/CouncilNews/ci_cns/pr_trees_091211.asp

Environmental services officer quoted

Aberdeen residents warned of bogus cold callers [Jan 2012]

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/CouncilNews/ci_cns/pr_bogus_callers_120112.asp

Trading standards team leader quoted

Stunning exhibition offer public unique opportunity [Jan 2012]

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/CouncilNews/ci_cns/pr_VanGoghtoVetriano_300112.asp

Art gallery and museums manager quoted

Quotes from partner organisations

The Media Team regularly works in partnership with outside organisations from both the public and private sectors who are engaged with the City Council on joint projects.

Media releases focusing on such initiatives carry a very positive and constructive message when all the partners involved are quoted, showing that joint working is delivering positive outcomes for the city.

The Media Team liaises regularly with the police, the fire and rescue service, the health service, the Scottish Government and many other agencies to secure attributed quotes for use in media releases.

Quotes from private sector partners are also sought when, for example, they are proposing to take over or develop a significant City Council asset or when we have contracted them to work with us on a noteworthy project, for instance new-build council housing or the redevelopment of Marischal College.

Similarly, an individual citizen or public figure may on occasion be quoted in a media release, for example if they have volunteered to assist the City Council with the delivery of a civic event or campaign.

Partnership working is crucial for community safety [Mar 2011]

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/CouncilNews/ci_cns/pr_communitysafety_310311.asp

Grampian Fire and Rescue Service, Grampian Police, and chair of Aberdeen Community Safety Partnership quoted

Dons manager unveils BHF Scotland healthy eating initiative [Jan 2012]

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/CouncilNews/ci_cns/pr_foodforthought_260112.asp

Craig Brown, head teacher and BHF spokeswoman quoted

Grandson of Auschwitz survivor helps Aberdeen mark Holocaust Memorial Day [Jan 2012]

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/CouncilNews/ci_cns/pr_holocaust_memorial_260112.asp

Survivor's relative and Depute Provost quoted

Ceremony marks latest milestone in council's new-build housing programme [Jan 2012]

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/CouncilNews/ci_cns/pr_oldcroft_gardens_100112.asp

Construction company and Housing and Environment convener and director quoted

Media releases with no quotes

The Media Team commonly issues releases concerning the operational day-to-day work of the City Council.

The releases cover, for example, mundane matters like minor roadworks, small events like guided walks or other countryside activities, or changes to service delivery about which citizens need to be informed.

In such circumstances, it is generally judged that an attributed quote from an official of the council would contribute little or nothing to the matter at hand and that disseminating the information to the media in a straightforward fashion is the most effective way to proceed.

Wellington Road lane closures during central reservation work [Jan 2012]

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/CouncilNews/ci_cns/pr_wellington_200112.asp

Volunteers needed to clear invasive rhododendron [Feb 2012]

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/CouncilNews/ci_cns/pr_elrick_hill_070212.asp

Alternative arrangements planned for city waste collections if strike goes ahead [Nov 2011]

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/CouncilNews/ci_cns/pr_waste_strikes_231111.asp

Statements attributed to ‘an ACC spokesman/woman’

The team receives many enquiries from the media every day on all aspects of the City Council’s operations, functions, duties and policies.

The majority of these enquiries are straightforward requests for information or for clarifications of complex or technical matters.

In these circumstances, as a rule of thumb, a corporate statement attributable to a council spokesman or spokeswoman is judged to be sufficient.

A comment in the name of a head of service or a director is considered more appropriate, however, if the enquiry concerns an operational matter which is liable to have an appreciable impact on a significant number of people – or if there has been a serious operational failure for which a senior official should be seen to be taking responsibility. A statement attributable to the Chief Executive may be most appropriate when public comment is required on very serious, controversial or important matters.

The Media Team must always bear in mind the demarcation between the political and operational spheres of the City Council.

Questions from the media which seek a justification of policy decisions by elected members will be referred to the council leader, the deputy leader or to the appropriate committee convener. If, however, the enquiry simply concerns an explanation of an

agreed council policy, the Media Team will seek to provide this in as clear a fashion as possible, without reference to elected members.

Evening Express [Jan 2012]

Question: Has ACC stopped supporting Tillydrone Youth Project following the decision to enter into negotiations with SHMU to take over management of the resource?

An ACC spokeswoman said. "We have entered into negotiations with Station House Media Unit with a view to them managing the operation of the Tillydrone Youth Project. Council officers will continue to offer resource support, working closely with the recently formed steering group to ensure the TYP and the great work carried out at the project continues. As with any community project we always welcome involvement from the local community and would be delighted to see more interested volunteers at the project's next meeting."

Press & Journal [Sept 2011]

Requesting details of theft of lead from the roof of Torry Library and council comment.

An ACC spokesman said: "We can confirm that lead was stolen from the roof of Torry Library. These acts of theft are costing the community money as the repairs are funded from the public purse. The money used to put right the damage could be used to constructive effect elsewhere in the community."

EE [Apr 2011]

Q: We have been informed that the staff at Balnagask care home are being moved out following a critical Care Commission report. Is this the case?

An ACC spokesman said: "Our primary duty is to ensure that residents in our care homes receive the best quality care and support. In light of concerns and issues highlighted in a recent Care Commission report, appropriate and alternative staffing arrangements are being put in place over the course of the next few weeks."

EE [Aug 2011]

Q: What happens next regarding any potential change in housing allocations policies to respond to the circumstances of personnel leaving the armed forces and facing the prospect of homelessness?

An ACC spokeswoman said: "The City Council is considering its housing allocations policies and the issue of returning forces personnel is part of the review. A report will go to the housing and environment committee in due course."

P&J [June 2011]

Requesting details of roadworks due to begin on 02 July on Ellon Road.

An ACC spokesman said: "The roadworks will be on the southbound carriageway, between AECC and Links Road [Donmouth] and are expected to last six weeks. Full details of the programme will be published next week. Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure director Gordon McIntosh said: "This work will cause considerable disruption to the many people who use the road on a daily basis, but the work must be done. The road is failing and if this essential repair work is not carried out, its condition will further deteriorate. The job is due to last six weeks and we will be pulling out all the stops to get it done as quickly as possible to minimise disruption to road users. We will monitor the work and its impact on the roads to ensure that everything which can be done to minimise the effect of the work is done. Delays are inevitable and I would urge people to use alternate routes or avoid the area if at all possible."

Appendix D

Elected Members Development Programme

Date & Time	Development Session	Delivered by	Location
Thursday 17th May 2012	Recruitment and Selection	Kirsty George – HR Adviser <i>Corporate Governance</i>	Committee Room 5
Thursday 17th May 2012	Business Risk Management	Martin Murchie - Community Planning & Corporate Performance Manager and, Neil Buck - Performance and Risk Manager	Committee Room 5
Tuesday 29th May 2012	Licensing Training	Eric Anderson – Senior Solicitor <i>Corporate Governance</i>	Committee Room 2
Monday 18th June 2012	Membership of Boards and Trusts	Brodies Solicitors	Frederick Street Training Centre
Monday 10th September 2012 Either: 10:00 – 12:00, OR 14:00 – 16:00	School Estates	David Wright - Service Manager, Assets & Finance <i>Education Culture and Sport</i>	Both Sessions: Committee Room 2
Monday 10th September 2012 Either: 10:00 – 12:30, OR 14:00 – 16:30 (1.5 hours plus questions)	Finance session – Priority Based Budget & 5 Year Plan	Carol Wright – Corporate Officer and, Steven Whyte – Chief Accountant <i>Corporate Governance</i>	AM: Committee Room 3 (10 places) PM: Committee Room 4 (22 places)
Thursday 13th September 2012 18:00 – 20:00	Introduction to Planning	Dr Margaret Bochel – Head of Planning & Sustainable Development <i>Enterprise, Planning & Infrastructure</i>	Committee Room 2
Monday 8th October 2012 10:00 – 12:00	Development Viability	Trinity Group Partners	Committee Room 2
Monday 8th October 2012 14:00 – 16:00	Internal Audit	Jo Brown – PWC, Internal Audit Provider	Committee Room 2

Date & Time	Development Session	Delivered by	Location
Monday 8th October 2012 13:30- 14:00	Signing Duties	Eric Anderson – Senior Solicitor <i>Corporate Governance</i>	Committee Room 2
Monday 29th October 2012 Either: 09:30 – 13:00, OR 13:30 – 17:00	Media Training	Richard Uridge - ACM Training	Both Sessions: Committee Room 3 (Only 6 places available – please reserve space)
Monday 29th October 2012 Either: 14:30 – 16:00	Making Equalities Happen	Sandra Bruce – Equalities Strategist	Both Sessions: Committee Room 5
Monday 29th October 2012 Either: 11:15 – 12:15, OR 13:30 – 14:30	Continued Professional Development Framework	Ami McQuarrie – HR Adviser, and Sarah Gadsden – Improvement Service	Both Sessions: Committee Room 5
Friday 23rd November 2012 14:00 – 14:30 New training	Signing Duties	Eric Anderson – Senior Solicitor <i>Corporate Governance</i>	Committee Room 4
Tuesday 27th November 2012 09:30 – 13:00	Scrutiny and Challenge (for members of Audit and Risk Committee)	Jo Brown – PWC, Internal Audit Provider	Committee Room 3
Wednesday 28th November 2012 13:00 – 15:30	Local Review Body	Contact Martin Allan	TBC
Monday 3rd December 2012 Either: 09:00 – 12:30	Chairing Skills	Clair Higgon - External Trainer and Legal and Democratic Services	Committee Room 2
Monday 3rd December 2012 Either: 14:00 – 16:00	Inclusion Review	David Leng - Head of Schools and Education Establishments <i>Education, Culture and Sport</i>	Committee Room 2
Monday 14th January 2013 14:00 – 16:00, OR Monday 21st January 2013 14:00 – 16:00, OR	Corporate Parenting	WhoCares? Scotland & Kay Dunn - Children's Service Manager <i>Social Care and Wellbeing</i>	Committee Room 2 Committee Room 2

Date & Time	Development Session	Delivered by	Location
Thursday 21st February 2013 14:00 – 16:00, OR Thursday 21st February 2013 14:00 – 16:00			Committee Room 4 Committee Room 4
Monday 4th February 2013 Either: 09:30 – 11:00	UK City of Culture 2017 bid and Future Delivery of Cultural Services	Lesley Thomson - Culture and Sport Commissioning Manager, and Patricia Cassidy - Head of Communities, Culture and Sport, <i>Education, Culture and Sport</i>	Committee Room 5
Monday 4th February 2013 Either: 14:00 – 15:30	Procurement/Tendering	Craig Innes – Head of Procurement <i>Corporate Governance</i>	Committee Room 2
Monday 4th February 2013 11:00 – 12:00	Health and Safety	Mary Agnew – Health, Safety & Wellbeing Manager <i>Corporate Governance</i>	Committee Room 2
Monday 18th February 14:00 – 16:00	Treasury Management	Alan George from Sector Treasury Services	Committee Room 2
Monday 25th March 2013 Either: 10:00 – 12:00	Social Work and its Statutory Responsibilities	Fred McBride – Director of <i>Social Care and Wellbeing</i>	Committee Room 2
Monday 25th March 2013 Either: 14:00 – 16:00	Waste and Recycling and Environmental Health, Trading Standards and Public Analyst’s Laboratory	Peter Lawrence – Waste and Recycling Manager, and Carole Jackson Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager and James Darroch Analyst <i>Housing & Environment</i>	Committee Room
Monday 13th May 2013 Either: 09:30 – 12:00	Adult Support and Protection	Kenneth O’Brien – Adult Protection Co-ordinator <i>Social Care and Wellbeing</i>	Committee Room 5

Date & Time	Development Session	Delivered by	Location
Monday 13th May 2013 Either: 14:00 – 16:00	Community Safety and Community Mediation – To be confirmed	Colin Walker – Antisocial Behaviour Officer , <i>Housing and Environment</i> and Irene Reid Team Leader, <i>SACRO Mediation</i>	Committee Room 5

North Ayrshire

Question	Answer
Urban/ Rural Authority	R
Population of Authority	135,130
Name of committee	Scrutiny and Petitions Committee
Committee established	May 2012 (post elections)
Powers held by the committee	To receive all petitions and deputations submitted to the Council except those relating to the Council's planning functions, which shall be considered by the Planning Committee. The arrangements for receiving petitions are as set out in Appendix B to the Standing Orders relating to Meetings and Proceedings of the Council and Committees.
The minimum number of signatures required to validate a petition	10 signatures from different households
Number of members on committee	7
Frequency of meetings	6 weekly, special meetings can also be called if necessary
Financial considerations of the committee	Committee report templates contain a section entitled Implications that includes information on financial implications
Decisions committee can make	
Any issues which are excluded from consideration by the committee	The Council is unable to consider petitions that are subjudice, that is, matters that are the subject of any current court proceedings. Petitions will only be considered if the criteria outlined in this guidance note have been met.
Length of meetings	1hr average
Arrangements for members of public speaking at meetings	Chair decides on receipt of petition whether it is to be accepted, and if so the petition holder is invited to the meeting to speak for 10 minutes
Is there a mechanism to allow deputations to other committees?	on issues other than petitions, but only at this committee
Has the number of petitions submitted reduced in the time since establishment of the committee?	1 submitted year previous to establishment, 1 submitted since established.
Any issues in establishing the committee	The previous Scrutiny Committee incorporated the area of audit as part of its remit. Some difficulties have been experienced in separating some of the more general functions of the Scrutiny and Petitions Committee with that of a newly created Audit Committee in order to avoid duplication of reporting.

Highland

Question	Answer
Urban/ Rural Authority	R
Population of Authority	232,000
Name of committee	Community Safety, Public Engagement and Equalities Committee
Committee established	May-12
Powers held by the committee	To design the process for dealing with petitions to be heard by strategic committees and to monitor the outcomes (still in progress). NB actual petitions to be heard by relevant committee, not CSPE and Equalities Committee
The minimum number of signatures required to validate a petition	50 or 10 local businesses, voluntary orgs or social enterprise companies
Number of members on committee	N/A
Frequency of meetings	N/A
Financial considerations of the committee	dealt with at/by strategic committees
Decisions committees can make	take no action and advise petitioner why. Agree the matter be subject of a report to future meeting, refer to another organisation if appropriate.
Any issues which are excluded from consideration by the committee	The Council is unable to consider petitions that are subjudice, that is, matters that are the subject of any current court proceedings. Planning, licensing and other matters with their own procedures (education transport appeals), matters which should be dealt with through complaints procedure or ombudsman, matters concerning individual elected members or council employees. employees terms and conditions, housing allocations in respect of individuals. re any decision made in previous 6 months. similar petition been considered in previous 12 months, matters designed to gain or reduce support for one or more political party, matters that could damage a persons reputation or discriminate against them.
Length of meetings	N/A
Arrangements for members of public speaking at meetings	petitioners invited to appear by the chair if they feel this would be helpful (10 mins and questions from members allowed)
Is there a mechanism to allow deputations to other committees?	
Has the number of petitions submitted reduced in the time since establishment of the committee?	
Any issues in establishing the committee	N/A

Stirling

Question	Answer
Urban/ Rural Authority	U
Population of Authority	90,770
Name of committee	Petitions Panel
Committee established	2009
Powers held by the committee	the consideration of petitions submitted to the council in accordance with the council's approved petitions procedure and determination of the appropriate action to be taken within the terms of the procedure (no powers beyond deciding whether or not to refer the petition to the appropriate decision making committee (with or without a rec)
The minimum number of signatures required to validate a petition	A petition must be supported by:- a. Petition from Citizens - at least 25 signatures from people living in the Stirling Council area and on the Register of Electors OR have the support of the relevant Community Council or one of the Local Elected Members by means of a Community Council Office Bearer or Local Elected Member countersigning the petition at the appropriate point and attaching a copy of the minutes of the Community Council meeting when the support was approved. b. Petition from Local Business(es) - support from at least 5 other businesses on the Valuation Roll OR have the support of the relevant Community Council or one of the Local Members by means of a Community Council Office Bearer or Local Elected Member countersigning the petition at the appropriate point and attaching a copy of the minutes of the Community Council meeting when the support was approved.
Number of members on committee	4 (one from each political party and chaired by opposition)
Frequency of meetings	5 per annum
Financial considerations of the committee	cannot commit council to expenditure, just refers to other committees or council
Decisions committee can make	The Petitions Panel will take a decision on action to be taken. Actions may include:-(a) agreeing that the issues raised merit further action and formally agreeing to:- (i) refer the petition to the relevant decision making body (ii) refer the petition to the relevant Community Planning Partner or other body (b) agreeing that the issues raised do not merit further action (c) agreeing to take any other action as appropriate. The petitioner will be advised in writing of the Panel's decision.
Any issues which are excluded from consideration by the committee	
Length of meetings	1 hr per petition
Arrangements for members of public speaking at meetings	
Is there a mechanism to allow deputations to other committees?	only planning and regulation panel as part of hearing process
Has the number of petitions submitted reduced in the time since establishment of the committee?	no more dependant on local issues
Any issues in establishing the committee	no more dependant on local issues

City of Edinburgh

Question	Answer
Urban/ Rural Authority	U
Population of Authority	486,120
Name of committee	Petitions Committee
Committee established	
Powers held by the committee	The Petitions Committee will take a decision on action including: agreeing that the issues raised merit further action and formally agreeing to refer the to the relevant decision making body; agreeing that the issues raised do not merit further action; and agreeing to take any other action as appropriate. The petitioner will be advised in writing of the committee's decision within 10 working days
The minimum number of signatures required to validate a petition	A petition can be considered if it is supported by at least 500 people who live in the City of Edinburgh Council area and are on the electoral register or by 20 businesses on the valuation roll. The Convener has discretion to declare a petition with greater than 250 signatures valid.
Number of members on committee	
Frequency of meetings	
Financial considerations of the committee	
Decisions committee can make	The Petitions Committee will take a decision on action including: agreeing that the issues raised merit further action and formally agreeing to refer the to the relevant decision making body; agreeing that the issues raised do not merit further action; and agreeing to take any other action as appropriate. The petitioner will be advised in writing of the committee's decision within 10 working days
Any issues which are excluded from consideration by the committee	The Council is unable to consider petitions that are subjudice, that is, matters that are the subject of any current court proceedings. Petitions will only be considered if the criteria outlined in this guidance note have been met.
Length of meetings	
Arrangements for members of public speaking at meetings	
Is there a mechanism to allow deputations to other committees?	
Has the number of petitions submitted reduced in the time since establishment of the committee?	
Any issues in establishing the committee	

Midlothian

Question	Answer
Urban/ Rural Authority	R
Population of Authority	80,000
Name of committee	Petitions Committee
Committee established	late 2012
Powers held by the committee	responsible for considering and dealing with petitions in accordance with procedures agreed by Council
The minimum number of signatures required to validate a petition	1
Number of members on committee	6
Frequency of meetings	6 weekly
Financial considerations of the committee	set out in the covering report (but don't make decisions)
Decisions committee can make	Committee can take following decisions - No action, in which case we will give you the reasons. Pass the petition to the relevant director or other Council Committee to look into, with or without any specific recommendation. If the petition relates to another public organisation, we may pass it on to that organisation with or without any specific recommendation. The Petitions Committee cannot change Council decisions, although they may ask for us to review a policy or procedure.
Any issues which are excluded from consideration by the committee	The Council is unable to consider petitions that are subjudice, that is, matters that are the subject of any current court proceedings. Petitions will only be considered if the criteria outlined in this guidance note have been met.
Length of meetings	not met yet
Arrangements for members of public speaking at meetings	We will ask you to make a statement (that lasts no longer than 10 minutes) to support your petition. You can bring one supporter to speak on your behalf. You and/or your supporter should be prepared to answer questions by the Committee. The Committee can stop you or your supporter speaking if you talk about something which would have made the petition invalid if it was included in the petition, or if you behave in an inappropriate way when you present your petition or statement.
Is there a mechanism to allow deputations to other committees?	
Has the number of petitions submitted reduced in the time since establishment of the committee?	
Any issues in establishing the committee	

Renfrewshire

Question	Answer
Urban/ Rural Authority	R
Population of Authority	170,250
Name of Board	Audit, Scrutiny and Petitions Board
Board established	2001 (petitions incorporated into committee in 2007)
Powers held by the Board	http://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/webcontent/home/services/council+and+government/council+information%2C+performance+and+statistics/council+boards/cs-ar-scrutiny-petitions-board To consider petitions in accordance with the procedures agreed by the Council.
The minimum number of signatures required to validate a petition	1
Number of members on Board	8
Frequency of meetings	5x per year
Financial considerations of the Board	none, either takes no action, refers to a Director or policy board (with or without a rec.) or refers to another org.
Decisions Board can make	
Any issues which are excluded from consideration by the Board	The Council is unable to consider petitions that are subjudice, that is, matters that are the subject of any current court proceedings. Petitions will only be considered if the criteria outlined in this guidance note have been met.
Length of meetings	2-3 hours (but Board considers much more than petitions)
Arrangements for members of public speaking at meetings	Invited to make a statement lasting no more than ten minutes to support the petition. Supporter can speak on your behalf if necessary. May be asked questions.
Is there a mechanism to allow deputations to other committees?	deputations allowed at each of the Council's Boards
Has the number of petitions submitted reduced in the time since establishment of the committee?	no previous mechanism for dealing with petitions
Any issues in establishing the Board?	no
Decisions Board can make	Take no action; refer to director of the council or a policy board; refer to another organisation

Council diary

(See separate document)