



**Glasgow City Council**

**Education, Skills and Early Years City Policy Committee**

**Report by Executive Director of Neighbourhoods,  
Regeneration and Sustainability**

**Contact: George Gillespie**

## **RESULTS OF COMMITTEE EFFECTIVENESS INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT**

### **Purpose of Report:**

To advise members of the main findings from the recent independent assessment of the Education, Skills and Early Years City Policy Committee, undertaken as required by the Council's Standing Orders.

### **Recommendations:**

The Committee is asked to:

- 1) Note the content of the report;
- 2) Consider the action plan, to be led by the Lead Officer, Executive Director of Education, in conjunction with the Convener and Vice Convener; and
- 3) Refer the report to the Operational Performance and Delivery Scrutiny Committee.

Ward No(s):

Citywide: ✓

Local member(s) advised: Yes  No  consulted: Yes  No

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council's Standing Orders require all Committees to undertake an effectiveness evaluation each year, and in year 3 of the Council an independent assessment. This report outlines the findings from the independent assessment which has been undertaken by the Executive Director of Neighbourhoods, Regeneration and Sustainability (NRS), George Gillespie, with the support of the lead officer for Committee related matters within NRS (Governance and Compliance Officer).
- 1.2 The scope of the review, which was recommended by the Head of Internal Audit, focussed on sharing best practice and potential ways to enhance the working of committees across the Council in the lead up to the next local government elections. This included the following questions:
- Is there a workplan agreed at least annually, and reviewed periodically?
  - Are agendas agreed in advance and do they follow the workplan?
  - Are papers and reports relevant, concise, accurate and accessible?
  - Do pre agendas take place and how do they operate?
  - Do all members have an opportunity to participate? Do members actively engage?
  - Does the Committee's work dovetail with other Committees to avoid duplication, but also to ensure that important and relevant issues are appropriately passed on.
- 1.3 Individual surveys for each Committee were issued to all Committee Members, Conveners and Vice Conveners via officers within Strategic Policy and Planning.
- 1.4 Two assessments have previously been undertaken for the Education, Skills and Early Years City Policy Committee (ESEY CPC) in [March 2019](#) and [March 2020](#).

### **NRS Approach to Independent Assessment**

- 1.5 An assessment questionnaire (a sample is provided in Appendix 1) was created to assist with the individual interviews of relevant officers and Councillors which were undertaken by the Executive Director of NRS and supported by the Governance and Compliance Officer. The assessment questionnaire sought to further expand on the issues highlighted in section 1.2 as well as ensuring that other issues were captured as part of the assessment, such as the impact of Covid-19 on the Committee. The assessment questionnaire was structured according to the following thematic areas:
- **Workplan** – review of the workplan, process for developing it and opportunities for providing input.
  - **Committee Reports** – quality of reports and timings.

- **Operation of pre-agenda meetings** – length of meetings and details of attendees.
- **Operation of Committee meetings** – terms of reference, Committee remit, engagement and participation, attendance, officer support, format of reports, progress of actions, length of meetings, general areas of improvement.
- **Membership: Co-opted members** – attendance and engagement;
- **Elected members** – with a particular focus on training sessions and whether these have taken place.
- **Covid-19 impact** – positive and negatives of the move to online arrangements and whether members have adjusted.
- **Previous assessments** – matters arising from the previous assessment in March 2019 and March 2020.
- **Other general issues** – standards of minutes, relationship to other Committees and opportunities for policy development.

1.6 Individual interviews were undertaken with the following Councillors and officers:

- Councillor Rhiannon Spear, Convener of the ESEY CPC.
- Councillor Margaret Morgan, Vice-Convener of the ESEY CPC.
- Maureen McKenna, Lead Officer, Executive Director of Education.

The Committee Clerk, Donna Brand, was also invited to provide input and was issued with a copy of assessment questionnaire for completion.

1.7 A sample of previous recordings of the Committees were also reviewed as part of the assessment as well previous Committee reports and workplans.

## 2. Executive Summary

2.1 The overall findings from the independent assessment of the ESEY CPC are positive, with examples of good practice evident (these will be discussed in more detail in section 3). The Committee is operating effectively with no major areas of concern identified. Two opportunities for improvement have been identified for Committee to consider and these are discussed in sections 4 and 5.

2.2 The following sections will provide a high-level summary of the findings in relation to each thematic area covered within the assessment questionnaire.

### Committee Workplan and Reports

2.3 The Committee workplan is agreed at least annually and reviewed periodically, with the opportunity for all members to provide input at Committee meetings. Items can also be added in-between meetings by members reaching out to the Convener/Vice Convener and/or the Lead Officer.

- 2.4 The approach to the developing the workplan is collaborative and demonstrates flexibility. For example, at the meeting of Committee in [January 2021](#), members were invited to advise the Executive Director of Education about future reports for the 2021/22 workplan and were presented with a summary of reports and activities for previous years to enable them to make informed decisions about the workplan.
- 2.5 Moreover, the Committee workplan is adaptable to changing circumstances, including as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. There is now a regular item on the Committee workplan in relation to 'Glasgow stories of Recovery, Resilience and Reconnection'. The research team within Education Services has produced a series of papers which look at aspects of education in Glasgow and the impact of the pandemic on the lives of staff, children and their families. This has enabled members to gain a wider sense of the education experiences of those involved in the process of recovery throughout the pandemic.
- 2.6 The issues which have been presented on the Committee's workplans are broad and wide-ranging relevant to its remit. The Committee has an important role to play and is responsible for considering several issues of importance including equalities and inclusive education, educational outcomes for care experienced young people and school years' attainment.
- 2.7 The majority of the reports presented at the ESEY CPC are policy update items rather than policy development. Work related to equalities has been effectively embedded as part of the Committee workplan and regular updates are provided to Committee on this issue.
- 2.8 There are standard reports which are taken to Committee throughout the year to keep members updated, for example, SQA attainment, attendance/exclusions and Curriculum for Excellence levels, analysis of school leaver destinations and leavers' attainment, progress of the West Partnership Regional Improvement Collaborative, whilst others are linked to the Council plan and service developments and, in response to points raised by Committee members.
- 2.9 There are on average 5/6 reports scheduled for consideration at each Committee meeting. This number of reports ensures that the duration of Committee meetings is not excessive in length.
- 2.10 The reports for Committee are issued on time and are relevant, concise, accurate and accessible.

### **Operation of Pre-Agenda and Committee Meetings**

- 2.11 The pre-agenda meetings take place approximately 10 days before the actual Committee meetings. They are efficient and last around 45 minutes to 1 hour.
- 2.12 The pre-agenda meetings are attended by the Lead Officer, relevant officers, Convener and Vice Convener of the Committee. Agendas are agreed in

advance and follow the workplan however as highlighted above there is a need for this to be flexible and responsive.

- 2.13 Committee meetings are well attended and there is effective use of substitutes to ensure appropriate political representation. The meetings are not lengthy and last on average 2 hours in duration. The Convener is inclusive and encourages participation of all members.
- 2.14 Officer support at Committee is effective, with officers attending Committee meetings prepared and able to answer questions asked by elected members. Where questions cannot be answered by officers during the meeting, officers provide a response timeously afterwards. The appropriate support is provided to the Convener and Vice-Convener of the ESEY CPC by the Lead Officer.
- 2.15 At almost every meeting, there is attendance by teachers and/or pupils to present on particular items. This works particularly well and enables members to ask questions directly about the issues and challenges within education. This is discussed in further in section 3 as an area of good practice.
- 2.16 The format of the presentation of reports by officers works well, with reports sometimes presented using powerpoint presentation slides although for the majority they are simply presented verbally by the relevant officer. The format of reports always enables the ability for members to have good discussions.
- 2.17 Reports are sometimes considered by Committee and then referred to the CAC for approval although the majority are just for consideration by the ESEY CPC.
- 2.18 The Committee is operating in accordance with its terms of reference. It is noted that there is sometimes discussion at Committee in relation to matters which are beyond the focus of the Committee reports presented, for example, operational matters. In those instances, the Convener is effective in reminding members of the Terms of Reference.

#### **Membership: Elected Members and Co-opted Members**

- 2.19 Attendance at Committee meetings is excellent and members actively engage. The standard of participation is high and there is open debate and discussion around policy development.
- 2.20 A range of training has been offered to members although the uptake has been poor, for example, in relation to the Curriculum and Glasgow's Improvement Challenge. Training has also offered to elected members in the form of visits to educational establishments. Although only a minority of members participated, of the members who did participate, the general feedback was positive and the visits were viewed as informative. It is recognised that there could be benefit in offering further similar training opportunities to elected members in the future. This is discussed in further below at section 4, opportunities for improvement.

- 2.21 There are three co-opted members (two parents and one voluntary sector representative) at the Committee and they attend and participate in the meetings.

### **Covid-19 Impact**

- 2.22 The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted upon the operation of Committees, resulting in the meetings being conducted online via Microsoft Teams.
- 2.23 For the ESEY CPC, the online format has worked well and members have adjusted to using Teams. There have been few technical difficulties.
- 2.24 It is recognised that there are benefits in continuing with the online approach to enable members to have a work-life balance, for example, to balance attending Committee meetings with caring responsibilities. However, there are some negatives in that it does not encourage full participation. From the review, it was suggested that participation is better in a non-virtual environment.

### **General Issues**

- 2.25 The standards of minutes for the Committee are satisfactory. It has been highlighted that there could be a minor improvement made to the minutes through providing a breakdown of specific voting details for each member. Officers have raised this with Committee Services and is highlighted in the action plan below (Recommendation 2).
- 2.26 Members have been offered consultation sessions in relation to particular policy areas (for example, anti-bullying policy) however only a minority of members have attended these.
- 2.27 The Committee dovetails well with other Committees and has considered issues from other Committees which are relevant and important to its remit. There are a few examples of this:
- Committee considered a report on the School Car Free Zones Programme in September 2021. This is a programme reported through the Environment, Sustainability and Carbon Reduction City Policy Committee, led by NRS and has significant implications for schools.
  - Committee considered a report on Glasgow's Family Support Strategy 2020-2023 which was presented by the interim Chief Officer, Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership.

## **3. Areas of Good Practice**

### **Engagement and Involvement of Teachers and Pupils**

- 3.1 One area of good practice is the direct involvement of teachers and pupils in the Committee. There are regular opportunities for Head Teachers, other staff and pupils to present to the Committee.

- 3.2 At every Committee meeting in the last year, the Committee has had presentations from schools updating on how they tackled lockdown/remote learning which has enabled members to have a greater understanding of the challenges and how learning has been delivered during the pandemic. Their attendance has been very well received by members and supports the effective functioning of the Committee.

### **Equalities**

- 3.3 The Committee has been effective in embedding issues associated with equalities into its workplan. Indeed, consideration of equalities issues is specifically highlighted within the Committee's terms of reference.
- 3.4 A regular update is provided on the Equalities Working Group at every second Committee meeting.
- 3.5 Some examples of equalities issues considered at Committee include:
- [Education Services Development Activities related to Race Equality](#)
  - [Equalities Working Group](#)
  - [Improving Diversity in the Education Workforce](#)
  - [Equalities Working Group](#)

## **4. Opportunities for Improvement**

### **Training Opportunities: Visits to Educational Establishments**

- 4.1 As noted above, members have been invited to participate in a series of visits to educational establishments however the uptake of these were poor. In August 2018, the Committee agreed to consider more about the work schools carry out to raise attainment and achievement of all pupils. The members of the Committee were to undertake visits to the Royston Learning Centre and to schools. Unfortunately, due to other commitments, only a small number of members were able to undertake these visits.
- 4.2 It is recognised that these visits are of benefit to members and those who did participate in the visits found it worthwhile. For example, the visit to the teacher training centre provided a valuable insight into how teachers are trained and the visit to the outdoor centre provided an effective insight into the importance of an outdoor setting to enable children to receive an all-round education.
- 4.3 It is recommended that when Covid restrictions allow, members should again be offered the opportunity to participate in the visits to educational establishments and these should be appropriately promoted by officers to encourage greater participation (recommendation 1).

### **Elected Member Engagement**

- 4.4 As noted above, a survey was issued via Strategic Policy and Planning to all Committee members and the Convener/Vice Convener.
- 4.5 Unfortunately, the response rate for the ESEY CPC survey was low, with only four Councillors participating out of a total of 15 members. Of the four Councillors who did respond, the overall findings are positive, however given the low return rate, it is not possible to make any full assessment of the views of other members of the Committee. Officers have therefore not included the results of the survey as part of the overall assessment of the Committee.
- 4.6 This conclusion perhaps reinforces the need for there to be improved engagement from members outwith the Committee meetings on particular issues, for example training.
- 4.7 2 recommendations have been made in total and these are outlined in Section 5 below.

## 5. Action Plan

No.	Observation	Recommendation
1	A range of training has been offered to members, including visits to educational establishments. Only a minority of members participated however of the members who did participate, the general feedback was positive and the visits were informative and worthwhile.	When Covid restrictions allow, members should again be offered the opportunity to participate in the visits to educational establishments and these should be appropriately promoted by officers to encourage greater participation.
2	There is no breakdown of how each individual member has voted in the official minutes of Committee.	Officers to engage with Committee Services to determine if this is something which can be incorporated into the official minutes.

## 6. Policy and Resource Implications

### Resource Implications:

*Financial:* None.

*Legal:* None.

*Personnel:* None.

*Procurement:* None.

**Council Strategic Plan:** N/A.

**Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:**



*Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2021-25? Please specify.* Yes – the Committee plays an important role in the development of the Council's Equality Outcomes 2021-25.

*What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report?* Within the Terms of Reference of the ESEY CPC, it specifically highlights equalities within the Committees remit.

*Please highlight if the policy/proposal will help address socio-economic disadvantage.* Same as above.

#### **Climate Impacts:**

*Does the proposal support any Climate Plan actions? Please specify:* N/A

*What are the potential climate impacts as a result of this proposal?* N/A

*Will the proposal contribute to Glasgow's net zero carbon target?* N/A

**Privacy and Data Protection Impacts:** No privacy or data protection impacts identified.

## **7. Recommendations**

The Committee is asked to:

- 1) Note the content of the report;
- 2) Consider the action plan, to be led by the Lead Officer, Executive Director of Education, in conjunction with the Convener and Vice Convener; and
- 3) Refer the report to the Operational Performance and Delivery Scrutiny Committee.

## Appendix 1: Sample Questionnaire:

Subject Area	Question	Response
<p><b>Previous Assessments</b></p> <p><b><u>Background:</u></b> 2 assessments (March 2019 and March 2020) have been undertaken for this Committee previously.</p> <p>Note that for the Committee, there are places for four co-opted members, two for parents, one for a young person and one for third sector.</p>	<p>In the first assessment, it was noted that members had been asked to visit specified schools during February and March (2019) with a summary report to be provided to the April/May Committee? Have these visits taken place and were they worthwhile for members?</p>	
	<p>In the second assessment, it was noted in the report that there was only one co-opted parent at the Committee, the young person was only able to attend once over 2019/20 and that the Glasgow Youth Council had been contacted to seek another representative for 2020/21:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have efforts been made to co-opt a second parent and have these been successful?</li> <li>• Has the Committee been successful in seeking another young person as a representative?</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Committee Workplan</b></p>	<p>Is there a workplan agreed at least annually, and reviewed periodically?</p>	
	<p>Who is involved in the review of the workplan?</p>	
	<p>What is the process for developing the workplan (who is involved)? Is engagement undertaken yourself and the Vice Chair in advance and do you provide input?</p>	
	<p>Do other members of the Committee have the opportunity to provide input into the workplan? And if so, how?</p>	
	<p>Are requests often received from members and non-members of the Committee for particular items to be</p>	

	added to the workplan? If so, how are these requests dealt with?	
	Have there been any instances where members have requested reports out-with the Committee's remit, if so, how have these been handled?	
	Are the reports on the workplan related to policy development (reviewing or proposing policies) or more towards updating on particular policy issues?	
<b>Reports</b>	Are papers and reports relevant, concise, accurate and accessible?	
	Are papers issued on time?	
<b>Operation of Pre-Agenda Meetings</b>	Do pre agendas take place and how do they operate? How long do the meetings generally tend to last?	
	Are Committee agendas agreed in advance and do they follow the workplan?	
<b>Operation of Committee Meetings</b>  <b>Background:</b> Terms of Reference: "To address the work plan of the proposed Council Plan theme: Excellent and Inclusive Education. To fulfil the functions of policy development (including consideration of equalities issues) as they relate to Council policies and services for education, skills and early years, but specifically excluding policy decisions relating to children and family social care functions, which are delegated to the Glasgow	Is the Committee operating in accordance with the Terms of Reference?	
	Do all members have an opportunity to participate? Do members actively engage?	
	What has attendance by members in general been like at the Committee? Is this monitored by the Business Manager?	

City Integration Joint Board.”		
<p><b><u>Background:</u></b>  There are places for four co-opted members, two for parents, one for a young person and one for third sector.  In the second annual assessment report, it was reported that the Committee only had one co-opted parent, a representative from Third Sector Interface Network and the young person from Glasgow Youth Council who was only able to attend once over 19/20. Glasgow Youth Council were contacted to seek another representative for 2020/21.</p>	<p>Do the co-opted members attend?  Do the co-opted members actively engage and have an opportunity to participate?  Do the co-opted members stay the same or change over a set period?</p>	
	<p>Could there be greater direct involvement/engagement from the Committee with teachers and pupils? For example, more opportunities for teachers to present at the Committee?</p>	
	<p>Do you feel that the Lead Officer for the Committee provides you with the appropriate support and guidance in your capacity as Chair of the Committee?</p>	
	<p>Do you feel that the format that officers present reports works effectively? For example, do they present their report using powerpoint slides? Or just verbally provide a brief overview of the report?</p>	
	<p>Could the way in which officers present their reports be improved? For example, could the presentation of reports be more concise?</p>	

	<p>Are officers generally able to answer any questions which may arise?</p> <p>Where a question cannot be answered at Committee, is a response provided timeously?</p>	
	<p>How are any actions taken forward and progressed from the Committee meetings?</p>	
	<p>Does the Committee often make recommendations to refer reports to the City Administration Committee for decision?</p>	
	<p>Is there open debate and discussion at Committee around policy development within the Committee's remit? Could this be improved?</p>	
	<p>Do members often review policy matters or make recommendations on policy direction at Committee?</p>	
	<p>How long do the Committee meetings last, do they last too long?</p>	
	<p>Are there any general areas of improvement in terms of how the Committee has been operating?</p>	
<p><b><u>Elected Members</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Background:</u></b>  In April 2018, there was an agreement at the Committee that 'members could be better informed if there was a better understanding of the challenges facing Education Services and that members' participation in educational activities outwith meetings of the committee was the way forward, with summarized reports on activities being submitted by members attending those activities'.</p>	<p>Has any training been offered for members? If so, what was this training and were the training sessions worthwhile?</p>	
	<p>How successful has members' participation in educational activities been to enable them to have a better understanding of the challenges facing Education Services? Has there been good uptake?</p>	
	<p>What have these educational activities involved? And will these be continued going forward?</p>	

<b><u>Covid-19 Impact:</u></b>	Do you feel that members have adjusted well to the online arrangements for operating Committees via Microsoft teams?	
	Do you feel that Microsoft teams has worked well to enable Committees to operate during the pandemic? What have been the positives? What have been the negatives?	
<b><u>Other issues:</u></b>	Are you satisfied with the standards of the minutes from the Committee meeting in terms of accuracy and content? Could any improvements be made, and if so, what would you suggest?	
	Does the Committee's work dovetail with other Committees to avoid duplication, but also to ensure that important and relevant issues are appropriately passed on?	
	Have any working groups been established for the Committee, and if so, why were they established and how did they operate?	