



**Glasgow City Council**

**General Purposes City Policy Committee**

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

**Contact: Ian Robertson**

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

### **Purpose of Report:**

To advise members of the main findings from the recent independent assessment of the General Purposes 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 Head of Communications and Strategic Partnerships in conjunction with the 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 Director of City Development, Ian Robertson, with the support of the lead officer for Committee related matters – Governance and Compliance Officer - within Neighbourhoods, Regeneration and Sustainability (NRS).
- 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 An assessment was previously undertaken for the General Purposes City Policy Committee (CPC) in [April 2019](#).

### 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 Director of City Development 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 2019.
- **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 Christina Cannon, Convener of the General Purposes CPC.
- Colin Edgar, Head of Communications and Strategic Partnerships, Lead Officer for the General Purposes CPC.
- Bailie Elaine Ballantyne, Former Convener of the General Purposes CPC.

The Committee Clerk, Cathy Birrell, 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 General Purposes CPC are positive, with examples of good practice evident (these will be discussed in more detail at section 3). The Committee is operating effectively with no major areas of concern identified. A few 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 members to provide input at Committee meetings.

2.4 The approach to the workplan demonstrates flexibility. For example, there are items on the workplan which do not have a confirmed target date however are presented for consideration by Committee to ensure that the item is brought to

members' attention. There is recognition that the workplan is a live document and will therefore evolve over time.

- 2.5 It has been noted that despite this, there is limited elected member discussion about the workplan at Committee. Creating more opportunities for informal discussion of the workplan may be of benefit and this will be explored further within sections 4 and 5 below.
- 2.6 The issues which have been scheduled on the Committee's workplans are broad and wide-ranging. The Committee has an important role to play and is responsible for considering several issues of strategic importance to the Council, including equal pay and job evaluation.
- 2.7 There are a mixture of both policy development and policy update items on the General Purposes CPC workplans.
- 2.8 There are on average 3/4 reports scheduled for consideration at each Committee meeting. It could be argued that this is considerably lighter than other Committee agendas and there may therefore not be a need for the Committee to meet as frequently (on a 6 weekly cycle).
- 2.9 The reports for Committee are issued on time and are relevant, concise, accurate and accessible.

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

- 2.10 The pre-agendas meetings are efficient and take place in the morning to allow time for any changes to be made ahead of the deadline for submission. The meetings are attended by the Lead Officer, relevant officers and the Convener of the Committee. Agendas are agreed in advance and follow the workplan.
- 2.11 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 last 2 hours in duration.
- 2.12 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 of the General Purposes CPC by the Lead Officer.
- 2.13 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 officer. It is recognised that making greater use of powerpoint presentation slides to present reports may be useful.
- 2.14 Reports are often considered by Committee and then referred to the CAC for approval. Some examples of this are outlined in section 3 which discusses policy development.

- 2.15 There is a general recognition that the remit of the Committee is broad and may have a clear lack of identity in some respects, in comparison to other Committees where their remits are much more specific. However, the general view is that the broad remit of the Committee is necessary to capture all other aspects of the Council's work which may not fit easily into the remit of another Committee. Moreover, as noted below in Section 3, the Committee has had substantial policy success. It is the departmental Committee for the Chief Executive's Department and Finance and as such has an important role to play in terms of overseeing staff and HR policy development. It could be argued that there may be merit in considering the possible re-naming of the Committee to more accurately reflect the issues the Committee deals with.

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

- 2.16 Attendance at Committee meetings is good and members actively engage. The standard of participation is high and there is open debate and discussion.
- 2.17 Training has been offered to elected members and it is positive that there have been specific training events, for example EQIAs. Although the uptake for the EQIA training event was low, of the members who did attend, the general feeling was that the session was informative and engaging. It is recognised that there could be benefit in offering further similar training opportunities to elected members in the future.
- 2.18 There is one co-opted Committee member from Glasgow Caledonian University and they are invited to participate during the meetings.

#### **Covid-19 Impact**

- 2.19 The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted upon the operation of Committees, resulting in them being conducted online via Microsoft Teams.
- 2.20 For the General Purposes CPC, the online format has worked well and all members have the opportunity to contribute. There have been few technical difficulties.

#### **General Issues**

- 2.21 The Convener has close engagement with the Convener of the Wellbeing, Empowerment, Community and Citizen Engagement City Policy Committee (WECCE CPC) as there can be an overlap in remits. The close engagement between Conveners ensure there is no duplication, although there is a recognition that sometimes a particular policy may be required to be presented to both Committees depending on the different purposes/perspectives. The general feeling is that there is a clear enough distinction between the work of the WECCE CPC and the General Purposes CPC.

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

## **Approach to Policy Development**

- 3.1 One area where good practice is evident is in relation to policy development.
- 3.2 The General Purposes CPC is unique in that it has issued calls for evidence and held a series of hearings as part of the Committee's creation of a City Food Plan for Glasgow which was a first for Glasgow City Council.
- 3.3 A breakdown of the approach to policy development for the City Food Plan undertaken by the Committee is as follows:
  - **September 2018 – Inquiry Commences:** Committee agrees to undertake an inquiry into food insecurity in Glasgow.
  - **September 2018 – Call for evidence:** 31 responses were received and these included community organisations and voluntary groups, public sector staff, and academics. There were also a number of personal testimonies received from people who had experienced food inequality/insecurity.
  - **November 2018 – Full Committee Session:** a variety of stakeholder groups presented during this session.
  - **December 2018 – Development Session:** The session was to consider and review the evidence gathered and to start to develop areas for action. More than 40 people attended the event.
  - **May 2019 – Glasgow Food Summit.**
- 3.4 It could be argued that this is an exemplar and example of best practice which other Committees could adopt as a model for policy development where appropriate.
- 3.5 In addition, the Committee has been effective in developing new policy in other areas. Some other notable successes in recent years include: Development of a British Sign Language Action Plan; a staff welfare plan, a sexual harassment plan, and the beginning of work on reducing gambling harm.
- 3.6 There may also be scope for the General Purposes CPC to utilise the policy development approach for the City Food Plan in the future for other policy areas where appropriate. It is recognised that it may not be appropriate for policies of a more technical nature.
- 3.7 Moreover, it is noted that there could be benefit in there being other opportunities for members to discuss policy issues outside of Committee meetings and that away days and development sessions would be worthwhile to factor into the workplan.

## **4. Opportunities for Improvement**

### **Greater Elected Member Engagement**

- 4.1 As noted above, a survey was issued via Strategic Policy and Planning to all Committee members and the Convener.

- 4.2 Unfortunately, the response rate for the General Purposes CPC survey was exceptionally low, with only two Councillors participating out of a total of 15 members. Of the two Councillors who did respond, the overall findings are positive, however given the low return rate, it is not possible to make any firm conclusions. Officers have therefore not included the results of the survey as part of the overall assessment of the Committee.
- 4.3 This conclusion perhaps reinforces the need for there to be improved engagement from members outwith the Committee on particular matters. Recommendations 1, 5 and 6 below are reflective of this and the need for there to be greater elected member engagement on the workplan, participation in training events and policy issues.

### **Operation of Committees**

- 4.4 As noted above, the Committee may be meeting too frequently given that there are only on average 3/4 items tabled for consideration at each Committee meeting. Recommendation 2 suggests that a review is undertaken to determine if this frequency is appropriate.
- 4.5 There is currently no Vice Convener of the Committee although there is an intention to have this post filled in the near future. This is highlighted in Recommendation 7.
- 4.6 7 recommendations have been made in total and these are outlined in Section 5 below.

### **5. Action Plan**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Observation</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
<b>1</b>	There can sometimes be limited discussion amongst elected members at the formal Committee meetings about the workplan.	Consideration to be given to the creation of an informal mechanism (workshop) for elected members to provide input into the Committee workplan prior to formal consideration at Committee. This may stimulate more discussion and engagement from members.
<b>2</b>	Committee meeting agendas have only 3/4 items on average tabled for consideration.	Undertake a review of the frequency of meetings and determine whether there is scope to reduce this given the light Committee agendas.
<b>3</b>	The format of the presentation of reports works well although there is a recognition that alternative formats may be effective in some instances.	Officers to give consideration to greater use of powerpoint presentation slides. This may be of benefit to Committee in terms of making particular reports more interesting and engaging.

No.	Observation	Recommendation
4	There is a general recognition that the remit of the Committee is broad and that it may have a clear lack of identity in some respects, in comparison to other Committees where their remits are much more specific. However, the general view is that the broad remit of the Committee is necessary to capture all other aspects of the Council's work which may not easily fit into the remit of another Committee. It is the departmental Committee for the Chief Executive's Department and Finance and as such has an important role to play in terms of overseeing staff and HR policy development. It could be argued that there may be merit in considering the possible re-naming of the Committee to more accurately reflect the issues the Committee deals with.	Undertake a review of the name of the Committee to determine whether a more appropriate name can be found which more accurately reflects the work of the Committee.
5	Training events have been offered to elected members – these have been informative and engaging but uptake has been poor.	Continue to offer training events to elected members related to the Committee's remit and ensure that there is greater promotion to encourage uptake.
6	There could be more opportunities for discussion about policy issues outwith Committee meetings.	Consideration should be given to exploring opportunities for members to discuss policy issues outside of formal Committee meetings through either away days or development sessions. These would seek to improve member interest and stimulate discussion. There may also be scope for the General Purposes CPC to utilise the policy development approach for the City Food Plan in the future for other policy areas where appropriate.
7	There is currently no Vice Convener in post.	The Committee should seek to appoint a Vice Convener in the near future.

## 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?* The General Purposes CPC is the Council's Committee for the development of equalities and related policies.

*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 Head of Communications and Strategic Partnerships in conjunction with the Convener; and
- 3) Refer the report to the Operational Performance and Delivery Scrutiny Committee.

## Appendix 1 – Sample Assessment Questionnaire

Subject Area	Question	Response
<b>Committee Workplan</b>	Is there a workplan agreed at least annually, and reviewed periodically?	
	Who is involved in the review of the workplan?	
	What is the process for developing the workplan (who is involved)? Is engagement undertaken with yourself and Vice Convener in advance and do you provide input?	
	Do other members of the Committee have the opportunity to provide input into the workplan? And if so, how?	
	Are requests often received from members and non-members of the Committee for particular items to be 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?	
<p><b>Operation of Committee Meetings</b></p> <p><b>Background:</b>  Terms of Reference: “In addition to the general terms of reference for all CP committees, to fulfil the functions of policy development (including consideration of equalities issues) as they relate to corporate Council policies, services and activities. These functions include: employment and personnel issues; corporate communications and marketing; customer care; procurement strategy; partnership engagement; and any other issues not within the Terms of Reference of another City Policy Committee.”</p>	Is the Committee operating in accordance with the Terms of Reference?	
	Do you have any comments on the Committee’s remit – do you feel that it could be more specific and focused?	
	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?	
	Are officers generally able to answer any questions which may arise? Where a question cannot be answered at Committee, is a response provided timeously?	
	Do you feel that the Lead Officer for the Committee provides you with the appropriate support and guidance in your capacity as Convener of the Committee?	
	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?	
	Could the way in which officers present their reports be improved? For example, could the presentation of reports be more concise?	
	How are any actions taken forward and progressed from the Committee meetings?	
Does the Committee often make recommendations to refer reports to		

	the City Administration Committee for decision?	
	Is there open debate and discussion at Committee around policy development within the Committee's remit? Could this be improved?	
	Do members often review policy matters or make recommendations on policy direction at Committee?	
	How long do the Committee meetings last, do they last too long?	
	Are there any general areas of improvement in terms of how the Committee has been operating?	
<b><u>Co-opted Members</u></b>	Do the co-opted members attend Committee?	
<b><u>Background:</u></b> Each Committee may appoint up to 4 people as non-voting co-optees.	How were the co-opted members selected?	
	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?	
<b><u>Elected Members</u></b>	Has any training been offered for members? If so, what was this training and were the training sessions worthwhile?	
<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>Previous Assessments</u></b>	It was noted within the previous assessment report that the committee called for evidence and held a series of hearings as part of the committee's creation of a food plan for Glasgow, this was a first for Glasgow City Council. How did this	
<b><u>Background:</u></b> A previous assessment was undertaken in April 2019.		

	work and do you feel it was worthwhile in terms of making a meaningful contribution to policy development?	
	How many hearings took place and who participated?	
	Do you feel that members enjoyed participating in the hearings? Was there any positive feedback from the operation of the hearings? Could any lessons be learned?	
	Is it the intention of the Committee to undertake hearings in the future for particular policy issues?	
	Do you feel that the hearings are something which should be implemented in other Committees where appropriate?	
<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?	
	Do you feel that there is a clear enough distinction between the remit of the Committee and <b><u>WECCE</u></b> ?	
	Have any working groups been established for the Committee, and if so, why were they established and how did they operate?	
	Should there be more opportunities for members to discuss policy issues outside of the formal Committee meetings?	