

# Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee

10am, Thursday, 10 October 2013

## Review of political management arrangements

Item number	8.1
Report number	
Wards	All

### Links

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Coalition pledges	
Council outcomes	<a href="#">CO24 &amp; CO25</a>
Single Outcome Agreement	

**Alastair Maclean**

Director of Corporate Governance

Contact: Kirsty-Louise Campbell, Governance Manager

E-mail: [kirstylouise.campbell@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:kirstylouise.campbell@edinburgh.gov.uk) | Tel: 0131 529 3654

## Review of political management arrangements

### Summary

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The Council agreed revised political management arrangements on 20 September 2012. The new model was designed to deliver streamlined and high-quality decisions with effective accountability and oversight from implementation on 29 October 2012.

The Council agreed to review the new arrangements after twelve months operation and to consider a final report with options at the Council meeting in October 2013. The agreed approach involved consultation with the public, elected members and senior officers.

The Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee was asked to consider elements of the consultation findings prior to final reporting to Council, with particular reference to the following key areas:

- Committee model;
- Public protection/community safety;
- Policy development and review;
- Scrutiny;
- Petitions Committee; and
- Webcasting.

### Recommendations

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1. To consider the outcome of consultation on the review of political management arrangements and make any appropriate recommendations to Council.

### Measures of success

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The political management arrangements will continue to be monitored and public perceptions assessed via the Edinburgh People's Survey from October 2013.

### Financial impact

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There are no direct financial impacts as a result of this report.

## Equalities impact

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There are no direct equalities impacts as a result of the report.

## Sustainability impact

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There is no direct sustainability impact as a result of the report.

## Consultation and engagement

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Three strands of research have been completed to inform the review of political management arrangements including:

- 8 public focus groups;
- interviews with petitioners, deputations, additional committee representatives and champions;
- in depth interviews with elected members and senior officers; and
- online survey for elected members.

## Background reading / external references

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[Item 8.1 \(b\) Review of political management arrangements – City of Edinburgh Council 23 August 2012](#)

[Item 8.1 Governance Review: political management arrangements and operational governance – City of Edinburgh Council 20 September 2012](#)

[Item 8.1 \(b\) Governance: Review of political management arrangements – City of Edinburgh Council 2 May 2013](#)

## Review of political management arrangements

### 1. Background

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- 1.1 The Council agreed revised political management arrangements on 20 September 2012. The new model was designed to deliver streamlined and high-quality decisions with effective accountability and oversight from implementation on 29 October 2012.
- 1.2 The Council agreed to review the new arrangements after twelve months operation and to consider a final report with options at the Council meeting in October 2013.
- 1.3 The agreed approach involved consultation with the public, elected members and senior officers and focused on the following areas:
  - 1.3.1 effectiveness of the political management arrangements with particular emphasis on committee structures, remits, policy, scrutiny, public engagement and business processes;
  - 1.3.2 public awareness and understanding of the Council's decision making processes; and
  - 1.3.3 developments in the public sector environment.

### 2. Main report

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- 2.1 The Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee was asked to consider elements of the consultation findings prior to final reporting to Council, with particular reference to the following key areas:
  - 2.1.1 Committee model;
  - 2.1.2 Public protection/community safety;
  - 2.1.3 Policy development and review;
  - 2.1.4 Scrutiny;
  - 2.1.5 Petitions Committee; and
  - 2.1.6 Webcasting.
- 2.2 In addition to the committee membership, all group leaders have been invited to attend the meeting.

## **Committee Model**

- 2.3 The current executive committee model has been in place since 29 October 2012 and consists of:
  - 2.3.1 Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee;
  - 2.3.2 Seven Executive Committees – Communities and Neighbourhoods; Culture and Sport; Economy; Education, Children and Families; Finance and Budget; Health, Wellbeing and Housing; and Transport and Environment. Each Executive Committee has a Policy Development and Review Sub Committee.
  - 2.3.3 Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee, Petitions Committee and Pensions Committee.
- 2.4 As part of the online survey elected members were asked to provide their view on how the new committee structure has improved key elements of the committee and democratic processes. The response is outlined in appendix one.
- 2.5 A number of benefits have been identified and realised from the current executive committee model including:
  - 2.5.1 councillor expertise developed in specific service areas;
  - 2.5.2 enhanced focus on key decisions and Council services;
  - 2.5.3 allows routine decisions to be taken within short timescales;
  - 2.5.4 all members involved in the development of policy and executive decision making; and
  - 2.5.5 supports greater stakeholder engagement with policy development.
- 2.6 Consultation feedback on the current committee model confirms that:
  - 2.6.1 38% of elected members indicated there are currently too many meetings with 42% stating the meeting frequency was 'just right';
  - 2.6.2 23% of elected members perceived an increased level of input to policy making by partners and stakeholders; and
  - 2.6.3 senior officers highlighted significant resource implications for service areas who can be required to attend up to 8 separate agenda planning and committee meetings.
- 2.7 The overall outcome of the consultation indicated that the majority of respondents would be open to consideration of the current executive model being adjusted or an alternative model.
- 2.8 The following options are proposed to strengthen and streamline the current executive committee model based on consultation responses:

- 2.9 Agenda planning meetings:
  - 2.9.1 continue current cross party arrangements;
  - 2.9.2 adjust to coalition members only; or
  - 2.9.3 convener and vice convener only with reports circulated to members for comments.
- 2.10 Policy:
  - 2.10.1.1 dissolve the Policy Development and Review Sub Committees and consider policy as an item on the committee agenda;
  - 2.10.1.2 retain sub committee and re-schedule to the same day as the executive committee; or
  - 2.10.1.3 use short life working groups to develop policy.
- 2.11 Remits:
  - 2.11.1 Communities and Neighbourhoods Committee remit expanded to include:
    - 2.11.1.1 review governance arrangements for the Edinburgh Partnership;
    - 2.11.1.2 community learning and development;
    - 2.11.1.3 locality planning including total neighbourhood; and
    - 2.11.1.4 community resilience.
  - 2.11.2 Governance, risk and best value committee:
    - 2.11.2.1 adjust remit to ensure scrutiny of an item being considered by an executive committee follows the decision being taken.
- 2.12 The main alternative to an executive committee model is a cabinet system. The cross party cabinet would discharge all the Council's decision making functions, except those reserved to Council, outlined in appendix two. In addition, good practice would be for the establishment of a range of scrutiny panels across key areas. Alternatively the existing Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee could be retained with the addition of a further scrutiny committee focusing on service delivery.
- 2.13 The benefits of a cabinet model can include:
  - 2.13.1 strategic and corporate leadership across all service areas reducing possible silo working;
  - 2.13.2 corporate decision making and oversight of cross-cutting services as opposed to multiple committees overseeing individual services;
  - 2.13.3 a focus on each of the key elements of the model - decision-making, policy and scrutiny;
  - 2.13.4 efficient and effective use of senior officer time;
  - 2.13.5 decision making structure is fast and streamlined; and
  - 2.13.6 clear accountability and transparency on decision making.

## **Public protection/community safety**

- 2.14 New scrutiny and governance arrangements for police and fire & rescue services were agreed following implementation of the Police and Fire & Rescue Reform (Scotland) Act 2012, creating a single police force and fire & rescue service for Scotland.
- 2.15 The Scottish Government had indicated that each Council should have flexibility to create a structure for the new arrangements that was best suited to their needs in line with the parameters of the legislation. In March 2013, the council considered 3 options for revised committee arrangements:
- 2.15.1 Option one: Public safety executive committee;
- 2.15.2 Option two: Scrutiny committee; and
- 2.15.3 Option three: Interim police and fire & rescue review committee.
- 2.16 The Council agreed to implement option three and consider further information as part of the Council's twelve month review of political management arrangements.
- 2.17 The remit of the interim committee focuses on advising, agreeing and scrutinising the Edinburgh Police and Fire & Rescue plans and services to consider and recommend improvements along with contributing to the delivery of national outcome 9 'we live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger.'
- 2.18 The arrangements for public protection/community safety and police and fire & rescue scrutiny were included in the consultation with elected members and senior officers but a conclusive position was not evident from the consultation feedback. The following options have been developed in line with comments and feedback received:
- 2.18.1 Option one: Health, Wellbeing and Housing committee. This committee currently has a remit that includes public protection including key areas such as community care services, offender service and community safety.
- 2.18.2 Option two: Communities and Neighbourhoods committee. There are existing synergies due to the remit including community and neighbourhood planning.
- 2.18.3 Option three: Public Safety Executive Committee. The pathfinder committee made a recommendation to Council in March 2013 to set up a new or revise an existing committee remit to draw together all areas of public and community safety within Edinburgh, including the scrutiny tasks related to police and fire & rescue.
- 2.19 The options outlined above to adjust the committee model could have implications for the application of the Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2004

(Remuneration) Regulations 2007 which restricts the Council to appointment of 24 senior councillors at a total cost of £633,000 per annum. The political management arrangements agreed in September 2012 allocated all of the 24 senior councillor posts and budget available. Accordingly there is no scope to designate the convener and vice convener of any new Committee as a senior councillor unless the committee arrangements are significantly revised.

### Policy development and review

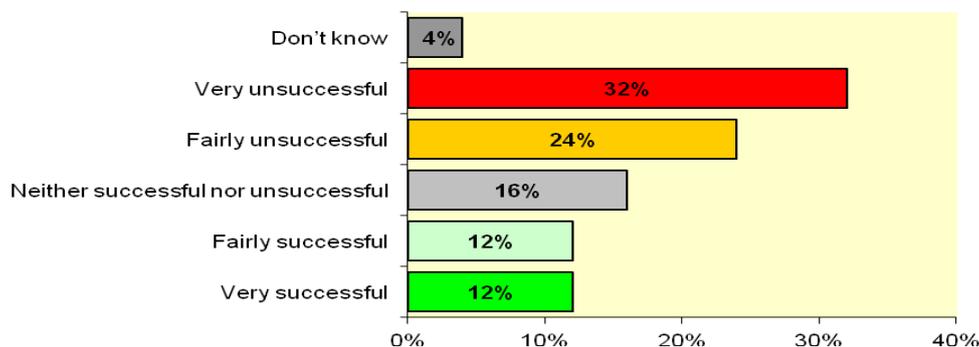
2.20 Engagement with citizens, key stakeholders, the third sector and communities has not historically been undertaken formally at the outset of policy development. Prior to October 2012 there was also a perception that administration back benchers and members of the opposition were at times unaware of the development of policy in the early stages, until a report was presented for approval at committee. The introduction of the Policy Development and Review Sub-Committees was designed to ensure that consultation and engagement was significantly enhanced, ensuring a range of input was considered at the early stages of policy development from both elected members and the wider public.

2.21 Feedback from public focus groups confirmed that members of the public would like a say on the local issues that affect them, at an early stage in the process. They indicated that early engagement with the Council via a deputation or the ability to give a presentation to elected members was critical to influence both the direction of discussion and decisions.

2.22 Two questions were raised around policy in an online survey of elected members to test the success of the new sub-committee arrangements. The specific questions and response are as follows:

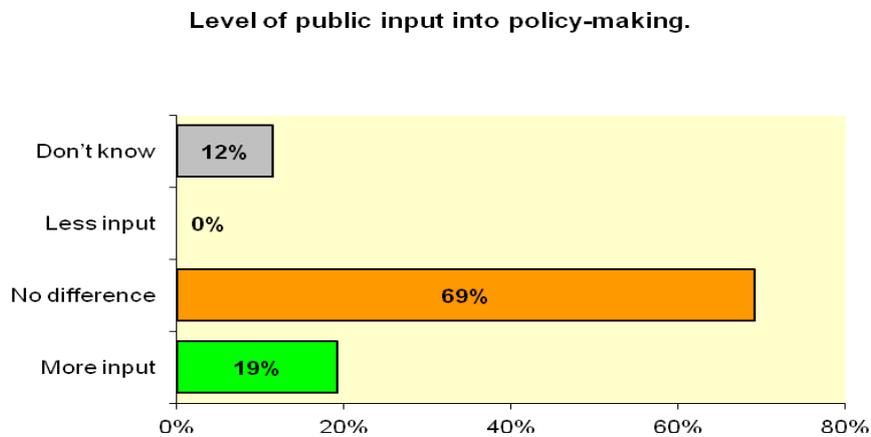
2.22.1 How successful or unsuccessful has the introduction of the Policy Review and Development subcommittees been at focusing on shaping policy?

**Success of the Policy Development and Review Subcommittees at focusing on shaping policy.**



2.23 So far the extent of policy development has been limited but there have been examples of early successes such as the vision for schools agreed by the Education, Children and Families Committee.

2.24 Do you think there is more or less public input to policy making?



2.25 As a result of feedback received during consultation the following actions are proposed to build on existing good practice developed so far:

2.25.1 remit: strengthen the committee terms of reference with more detail so the sub-committees operate and evolve in a uniform way;

2.25.2 guidance: best practice has been identified in a number of the sub-committees, particularly Health, Wellbeing and Housing and Economy. Detailed, targeted guidance could be made available for elected members, officers and members of the public;

2.25.3 promotion: wider promotion to ensure public awareness including webcasting, agenda promotion, greater presence on the Council website and social media; and

2.25.4 review: further review of effectiveness in June 2015.

### Scrutiny

2.26 Oversight arrangements pre-May 2012 were assessed by Audit Scotland as not consistently effective. This was largely attributable to the narrow remit of the former Audit Committee which did not have a focus on services, quality improvement or lessons learned. The Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee was introduced with a much wider, detailed remit covering key areas of Council risk and performance. The remit of the committee was designed to ensure effective, visible oversight and scrutiny in key areas including operational performance, risk and decision-making.

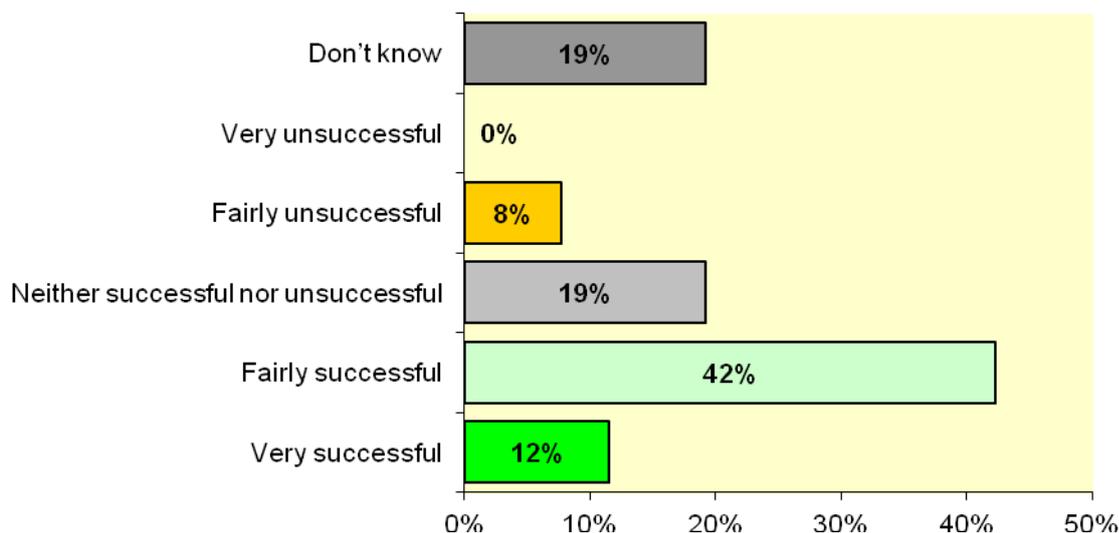
2.27 As part of the review a number of public focus groups were undertaken and some of the feedback indicated that members of the public were:

2.27.1 seeking assurance on the level of scrutiny on major issues and projects;  
and

2.27.2 seeking further transparency and openness on how council decisions have been made directly from the Council.

2.28 Elected members were asked in an online survey how successful or unsuccessful they thought the introduction of the Governance, Risk and Best Value committee had been at enhancing scrutiny and details of the responses are outlined below:

**Success of GRBV Committee at enhancing scrutiny.**



2.29 Elected members were asked how the quality and effectiveness of scrutiny could be further improved and the following options have been developed in line with the consultation responses:

2.29.1 greater emphasis on planned scrutiny review;

2.29.2 further development of risk based approach;

2.29.3 adjustment of committee remit to ensure that scrutiny follows rather than precedes a committee decision; and

2.29.4 further detail added to minutes when the committee is not being webcast to reflect the distinct role of scrutiny.

### **Petitions Committee**

2.30 The Council aims to be as inclusive and accessible as possible and deliver quality and best value by providing good quality services, which meet the needs of the public, key stakeholders, customers and communities. The Council's petitions process was designed to encourage members of the public, key stakeholders, customers, businesses and communities to fully participate in the decision making process, both in groups and as individuals.

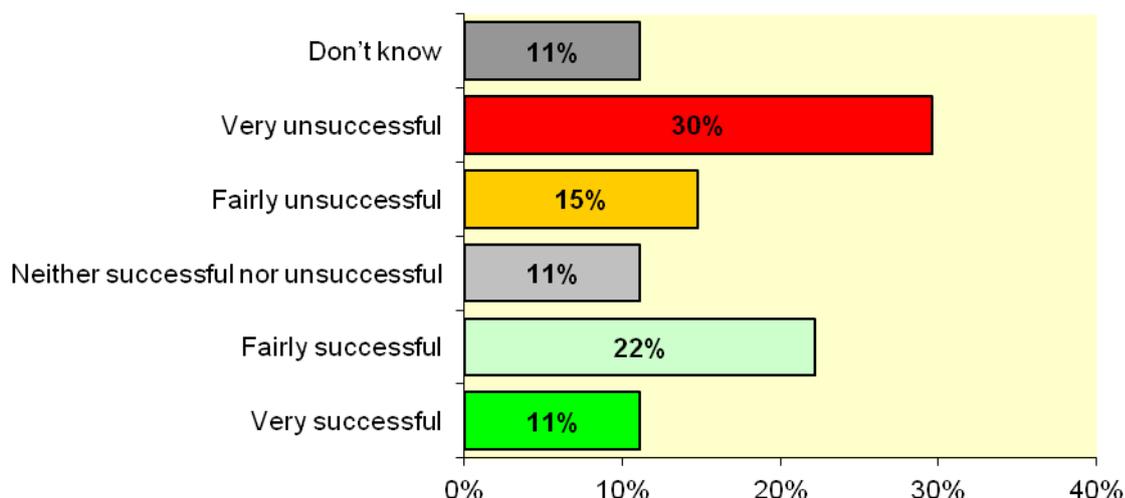
2.31 The petitions process was launched in October 2012 and the Petitions Committee met for the first time in December 2012. Since then 22 petitions have been submitted of which 13 were valid and have received more than 7500 signatures from members of the public and 26 signatures from local businesses.

2.32 To date 9 petitions have been considered by the Committee with the following outcomes:

- Kirkliston Public Transport Provision: Committee agreed to take further action - referred to Transport and Environment Committee.
- Dumbiedykes Bus Committee: Committee agreed to take further action - referred to Transport and Environment Committee.
- Crackdown on Legal Loan Sharks: Committee agreed to take further action –referred to the Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee.
- A safer mechanism for reporting Edinburgh Council mismanagement: Committee agreed to take further action –referred to the Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee.
- Princes Street for People: Committee agreed to take further action – referred to ‘Building a Vision for the City Centre’ consultation.
- Bedroom Tax: - Committee agreed to take further action – referred to Health, Wellbeing and Housing Committee.
- Remove religious observance from non-denominational schools: Committee agreed to take further action – referred to the Education, Children and Families Committee.
- Retain religious observance in non-denominational schools: Committee agreed to take further action – referred to the Education, Children and Families Committee.
- Ban cycling on City Centre pavements by cyclists over 12 years: Committee agreed to take further action - referred to Transport and Environment Committee

2.33 Elected members were asked in an online survey how successful or unsuccessful the introduction of the Petitions Committee has been at providing a clear route for the public to influence Council business? The response was as follows:

**Success of the Petitions Committee at providing a clear route for the public to influence Council business.**



2.34 The public focus groups undertook in depth discussions on a range of key areas in relation to the Council's decision making processes. The feedback on arrangements for petitions was:

2.34.1 the petitions process appeared lengthy and potentially onerous for the petitioner; and

2.34.2 respondents were sceptical around the effectiveness of a petition influencing the Council's decision making processes and outcomes.

2.35 As a result of the feedback received during consultation the following actions are proposed:

2.35.1 widen validity criteria for petitions with local interest to cover communities of interest;

2.35.2 revise the remit to ensure valid petitions are within the Council's powers and remit;

2.35.3 streamline petitions processes;

2.35.4 revise guidance;

2.35.5 introduce youth petitions; and

2.35.6 promote and highlight positive outcomes.

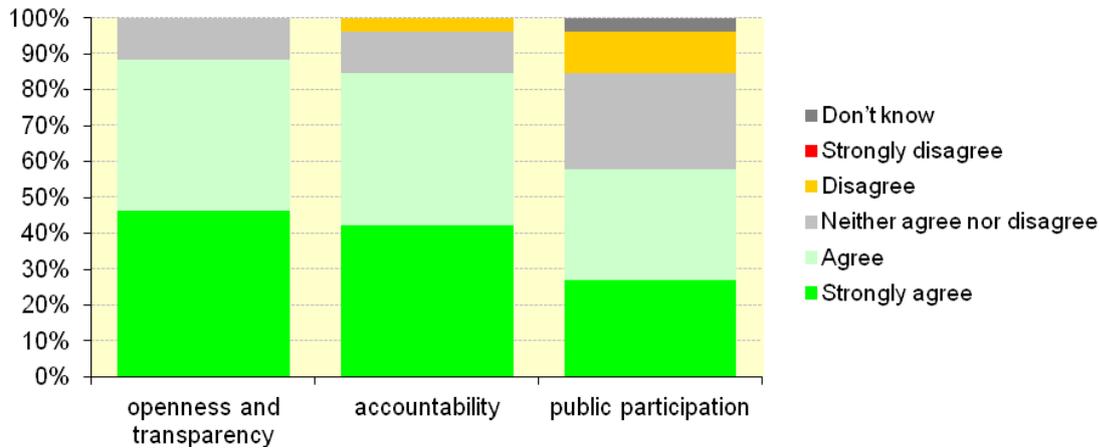
**Webcasting**

2.36 Webcasting of live Council meetings commenced in September 2012. In addition, the Petitions Committee and Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee have also been webcast from the Council chamber.

2.37 To date over 5,000 people have watched Council and committee meetings webcast live and over 19,000 have viewed footage of meetings in the archive.

2.38 Elected members were asked in an online survey to what extent webcasting had improved openness and transparency, accountability and public participation.

The introduction of webcasting Council meetings has improved...



2.39 All public focus groups discussed webcasting and unanimously agreed this was a positive step. This was seen to provide the public with the opportunity to see and hear debates as well as decisions being made by elected members in Council and committee meetings. Webcasting was perceived as making Council business more open and transparent.

2.40 Based on the feedback the following options are being developed:

- 2.40.1 Set up the Dean of Guild room to webcast a range of committee meetings;
- 2.40.2 Increase promotion of agendas;
- 2.40.3 Greater use of social media; and
- 2.40.4 Newsfeeds in Council buildings covering specific committee based stories or local decisions.

### 3. Recommendations

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3.1 To consider the outcome of consultation on the review of political management arrangements and make any appropriate recommendations to Council.

**Alastair Maclean**

Director of Corporate Governance

**Coalition pledges**

**Council outcomes** CO24 – The Council communicates effectively internally and externally and has an excellent reputation for customer care.

CO25 – The Council has efficient and effective services that deliver on objectives.

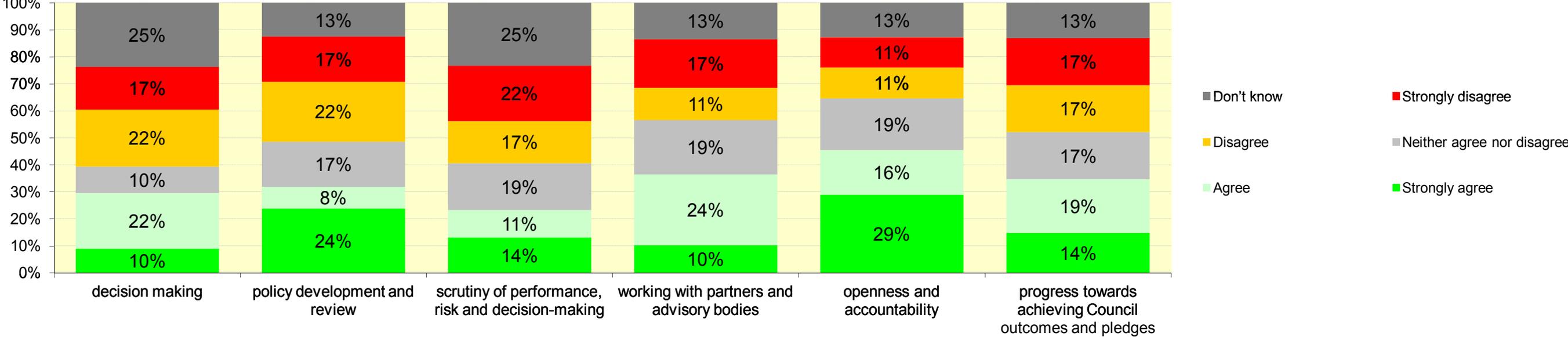
**Single Outcome Agreement**

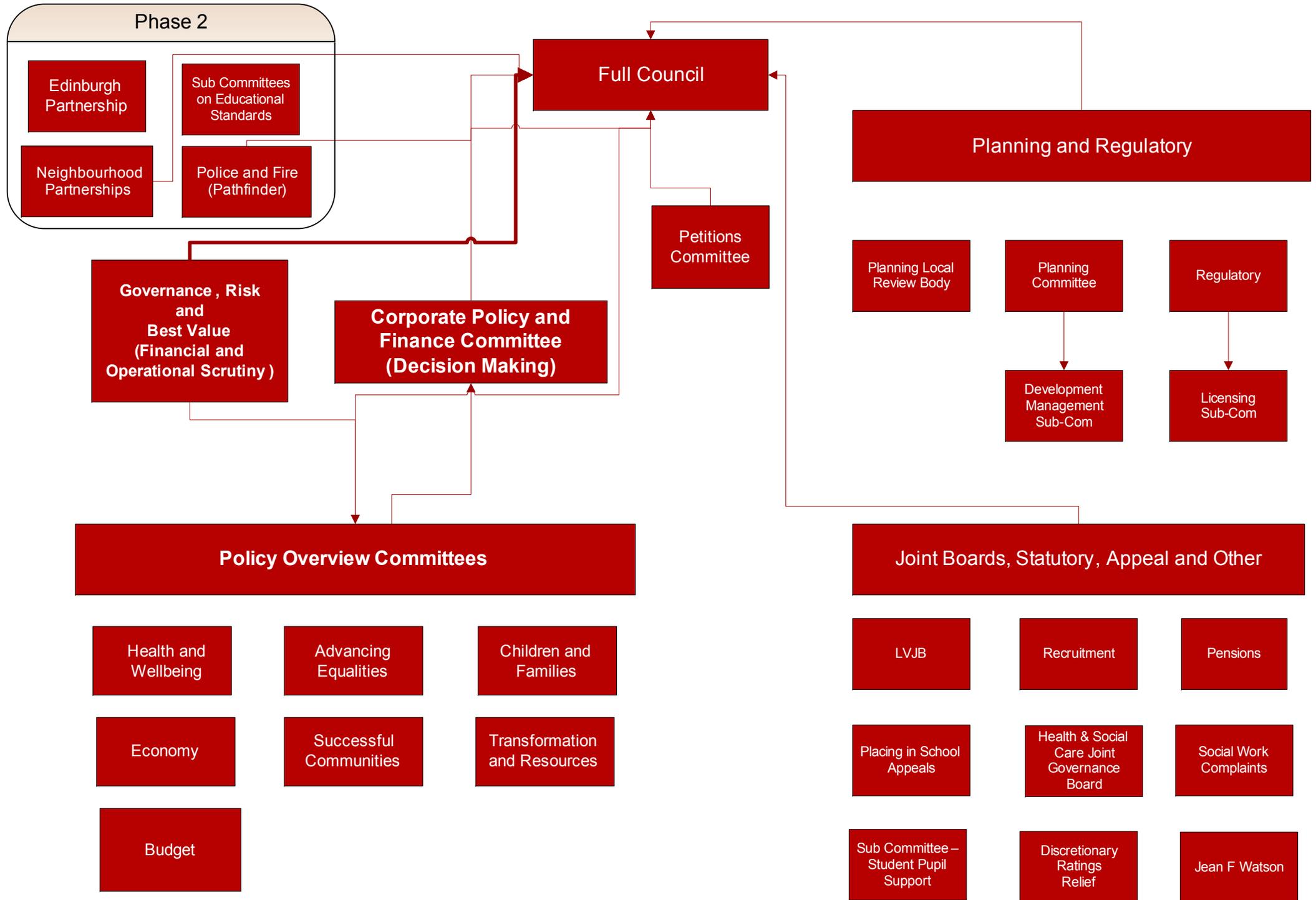
**Appendices**

Appendix one: consultation response: ‘the new committee structure has helped improve ’

Appendix two: Cabinet model

The new committee structure has helped improve





**Phase 2**

Edinburgh Partnership

Sub Committees on Educational Standards

Neighbourhood Partnerships

Police and Fire (Pathfinder)

Full Council

Planning and Regulatory

Governance, Risk and Best Value (Financial and Operational Scrutiny)

Corporate Policy and Finance Committee (Decision Making)

Petitions Committee

Planning Local Review Body

Planning Committee

Regulatory

Development Management Sub-Com

Licensing Sub-Com

Policy Overview Committees

Joint Boards, Statutory, Appeal and Other

Health and Wellbeing

Advancing Equalities

Children and Families

LVJB

Recruitment

Pensions

Economy

Successful Communities

Transformation and Resources

Placing in School Appeals

Health & Social Care Joint Governance Board

Social Work Complaints

Budget

Sub Committee - Student Pupil Support

Discretionary Ratings Relief

Jean F Watson