

Committee:	Date:
Policy and Resources	3 June 2021
Subject: Public Relations (& Economic Development) Sub-Committee – Future Arrangements	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	Corporate Plan Outcomes 1-12
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N/A
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of: Town Clerk	For Decision

Summary

The Public Relations and Economic Development (PRED) Sub-Committee operates on behalf of the Policy & Resources Committee and has, until relatively recently, provided a specific forum for discussion of matters relating to the City Corporation's Economic Development, Public Relations, Corporate Affairs and Communication activities, including any related plans, policies and strategies, and sport engagement.

The Sub-Committee has no power to act (except in respect of matters concerning sport engagement) and any reports which require a decision are also submitted to Policy & Resources as the parent committee, for a decision in the context of the sub-committee's views.

Following the establishment of a new Innovation & Growth Advisory Board, those aspects relating to economic development which were previously under the purview of PRED have now moved out of its remit. Consequently, at the May 2021 meeting, Members determined to consider the future of the PRED Sub-Committee and how the area of work overseen by it might be considered most effectively.

This report outlines four broad options intended to generate discussion in relation to the Sub-Committee's future, either for determination or further exploration, as Members see fit.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee gives consideration to the various options set out at paragraphs 8 – 27 of this report, together with any additional proposals advanced by Members, and determine a preferred way forward in respect of the Public Relations Sub-Committee (including any alternative name as considered appropriate).

Main Report

Background

1. For many years, the Policy & Resources Committee has had a Public Relations and Economic Development (PRED) Sub-Committee. This sub-committee has traditionally focused on all matters relating to the City Corporation's Economic Development, Public Relations, Corporate Affairs and Communication activities, including any related plans, policies and strategies. In 2019, responsibility for sport engagement was also added to the Sub-Committee's Terms of Reference.
2. However, in early 2021, the decision was taken to establish a new Innovation & Growth Advisory Board, which would take on, amongst other things, those aspects relating to economic development which were previously under the purview of PRED.
3. Consequently, at your May 2021 meeting when considering the annual constitution of sub-committees, Members were minded that broader consideration would need to be given the future of the PRED sub-committee, both in terms of format and composition.
4. At a minimum, the "Economic Development" aspects would be removed from the body's name and terms of reference and was agreed in the interim; however, wider consideration should also be given to the future of the sub-committee, noting the suggestions and commentary arising through the ongoing Governance Review process.
5. For instance, whilst Lord Lisvane proposed the sub-committee's abolition, some Members had suggested the existing body should instead continue in its present format (i.e. as a sub-committee) but with a narrower focus on corporate affairs, public relations, and general communications matters. Another suggestion had been that the Innovation & Growth Advisory Board model might be replicated as a format for this strand of activity, facilitating a more informal approach (rather than a sub-committee) to allow for the expertise of the Court's wider membership – as well as external figures – to be drawn upon for specific issues or topics and help inform formal decision-making by Policy & Resources.
6. Following the removal of the "economic development" aspects, the sub-committee's current composition and terms of reference is as follows:-

Composition

- *Chair, Deputy Chairman & Vice Chairmen of the Policy and Resources Committee*
- *Past Chairmen of the Policy and Resources Committee, still on the Committee*
- *Chairman of the Finance Committee*
- *Chairman of the General Purposes Committee of Aldermen*
- *Senior Alderman Below the Aldermanic Chair*
- *Five Members of the Policy and Resources Committee, elected by the Committee*
- *Four Members of the Court of Common Council, co-opted by the Sub-Committee*
- *Up to two non-City of London Corporation members, who shall not have voting rights.*

In 2020/21, the Members appointed by the Policy & Resources Committee were as follows:-

*Tijs Broeke
Karina Dostalova
Anne Fairweather
Alderman Tim Hailes
Deputy Jamie Ingham Clark.*

Terms of Reference

To consider and report to the Grand Committee on all matters relating to the City Corporation's Public Relations, Public Affairs and Communication activities, including any related plans, policies and strategies, including oversight and governance of Sport Engagement (with power to act).

Options

7. Four broad options in relation to the future of the sub-committee are set out for Members' consideration and to generate debate or further thinking, as follows:-
 - (i) ***Retain the sub-committee as-is, pending the outcomes of the Governance Review***
8. In light of the ongoing Governance Review and the many discussions around what committees and sub-committees might be merged, retained, enhanced or abolished, Members might well be minded that it would be precipitate to engage in any ad hoc activity relating to the detailed review of an individual sub-committee.
9. For instance, it might well be that any decision about the sub-committee's future taken now could emerge as unsuitable, in the light of any revised committee structure set by the Court. Consequently, any arrangement might require substantial revisiting within only a few months of being established, which would not represent a prudent use of Members' time.
10. Indeed, your Resource Allocation Sub-Committee has recently determined that, having dealt with a number of aspects of Lord Lisvane's Governance Review discretely up until this point, it now wishes to take a more holistic approach to the remaining recommendations around the committee structure, considering it in the round.
11. Whilst the current arrangements might not be what is wanted in the longer-term, Members may, therefore, consider them to be adequate in the current situation until the wider outcomes of the Governance Review are known.
12. If Members were so minded as to pursue this option, then the terms of reference and composition of the sub-committee would remain as set out at paragraph 6. Your Committee may wish, in such a circumstance, to seek expressions of interest in the usual way and conduct an electronic ballot following the meeting to determine appointees.

(ii) *Dissolve the sub-committee and reabsorb its functions into the day-to-day activity of the Policy and Resources Committee*

13. Given PRED's lack of decision-making powers (beyond sport engagement) and the need for the Grand Committee to sign-off on all proposals as a result, it could be argued that dissolving the sub-committee would reduce a layer of duplication - particularly given that the membership of PRED is largely drawn from the Grand Committee already, so there is a reasonable replication of Members involved in discussions.
14. By taking on more direct oversight of these matters, it might be said that Policy & Resources would be increasing the prominence of public relations and public affairs matters at a higher level.
15. However, care would need to be taken to ensure that relevant matters were afforded the time and space for discussion that they might normally benefit from through a dedicated sub-committee. Whilst the establishment the new Innovation & Growth Advisory Board and removing economic development from PRED's remit does go some way towards mitigating against these concerns, with there being less business for the Sub to consider as a consequence, Members will nevertheless wish to satisfy themselves that Policy & Resources would be able to provide sufficient oversight of the remaining areas previously overseen by the Sub-Committee.
16. One related variant could also be to merge the remaining functions of PRED with another existing sub-committee of Policy & Resources; however, given the distinct lack of synergy between the activities of this sub-committee and the others under Policy & Resources, this option is not explored further in this paper.

(iii) *Retain / establish as an enhanced specialist sub-committee*

17. Alternatively, Members may feel that the removal of economic development from its remit provides PRED with a welcome opportunity to refine its role and provide a more specialist focus on corporate public affairs, public relations, and communications matters.
18. The importance of these items has become even more apparent throughout the COVID period and, through the Governance Review process, several Members have reflected on a need for greater corporate oversight of such activity.
19. Given that the current composition of the sub-committee is relatively large and was designed with the intent to cover a much broader remit, the membership arrangements might also benefit from being revisited under these new arrangements. Arguably, a smaller and more focused group, afforded the latitude to access external expertise, as well as input from Members of the wider Court with professional knowledge or experience of relevant issues as and when required, could be of benefit.
20. Equally, with this enhanced sub-committee enjoying a more discrete and specialised function, consideration might wish to be given to delegating more decision-making powers down, thereby minimising duplication of discussion or decision-making at the sub and grand committee level.
21. Whilst there is a question as to the fit of the "sport engagement" aspect of the sub-committee's terms of reference in this new more focused body, the current

arrangements are felt to have worked well and, in the interests of avoiding the creation of an additional sub-committee with a very narrow area of focus, it is suggested that this function would be best retained here for the time being (pending the wider outcomes of the Governance Review or longer-term consideration of this specific function).

22. Should this option be preferred, it is suggested that a strategy session would be beneficial to help formulate concrete proposals, where Members can discuss with relevant officers (holding responsibility for public affairs, public relations, communications and associated activities) and define the reporting that would be beneficial for both Members and Officers and articulating the direction Members wish to shape. This could help to provide a welcome improvement on oversight of and input into the annual programme of communications and external affairs, perhaps with a view to developing a genuine relationship management strategy and allowing for a more strategic approach in general to communications activities.

(iv) Replace PRED with a Working Party arrangement, similar to that employed for the new Innovation & Growth Advisory Board (IGAB)

23. One other option could be to seek to replicate arrangements recently employed through the establishment of the Innovation & Growth Advisory Board (IGAB).
24. That Board has been established as a much more informal body with a small core group of Members and a number of fixed external experts, but utilising the ability to bring on board a wide array of internal and external individuals to assist or contribute to particular topics.
25. The Board is advisory only, and intended to provide informal guidance or direction to Innovation & Growth on the implementation of the Competitiveness strategy (with formal oversight held by Policy & Resources), as well as offering expertise and insight to officers and Policy & Resources on relevant items. All decision-making power rests with the parent Committee (Policy & Resources), which also receives the minutes of meetings in the usual way.
26. However, whilst this model may be beneficial in the particular case of Innovation & Growth and their work in supporting the financial and professional services sector, it is not clear that the same would necessarily be true for the Corporation's corporate affairs / communications activities.
27. Many of these areas are particular to the Corporation and the target of activities are not analogous; in addition, there is no direct comparator in this area to the Competitiveness Strategy IGAB is designed to assist with. This could cause confusion in defining the role, activities, and desirable membership of such a body. There would be some concern in particular in relation to having full external members, given the remit in question, with it perhaps being more suitable to bring in people to offer advice or ideas in certain areas on an ad hoc basis, rather than as members.

Conclusion

28. Set out above are four broad options for the future of the sub-committee, which Members are invited to explore. Clearly, this is not an exhaustive list of options: Members may also wish to suggest their own preferred alternatives for consideration.