



**Policy and Education Committee**

**Note of the Committee Session held on 29 June 2021:  
Item 3 Review Summary and Reflections**

*Unconfirmed*

**Chair:** Professor Deborah Bowman

**Present:** Daniel Bailey  
Dr Marvelle Brown  
Sarah Botterill  
Bob Davies  
Elizabeth Elander  
Dr Joan Martin  
Professor Raymond Playford  
Nick Woodhead

**In attendance:** Steven Bettles, Policy Manager, Professional Standards  
Fiona Browne, Director of Education, Standards and Development  
Kabir Kareem, Quality Assurance Liaison Officer, Professional Standards  
Matthew Redford, Chief Executive and Registrar  
Marcia Scott, Council and Executive Support Officer

**Item 3: Review Summary and Reflections**

1. The Chair declared an interest in relation to the Good Governance Institute (GGI) as a founding faculty member.
2. The Chair introduced the seminar session setting out the purpose and aims of the discussion. Members were thanked for their participation and constructive candour in completing the survey.
3. The following points were highlighted:
  - a. Following the evolution of the Policy Advisory Committee to the Policy and Education Committee ('PEC'), and the appointment of new members and Chair in June 2020, PEC members were invited to complete a review of the PEC and its work. The review method was an adapted self-assessment anonymised questionnaire adapted from a validated tool devised by The Tavistock Institute board effectiveness and function team comprising a series of items scored by Likert Scale and some open questions.
  - b. All PEC members and those who regularly attend from Executive Team were invited to complete the questionnaire. The paper sets out the complete

results from the review to facilitate an open discussion and consideration of how the Committee might wish to develop and work in future.

- c. It is recognised that the results are the responses of a small group and not representative beyond the PEC and the Executive.
- d. It was noted that the responses highlighted differences about the timing of the meetings, the purpose of the Committee, and the amount of documentation received by members.
- e. Members were invited to:
  - Reflect on the results as presented.
  - Identify examples of positive committee practice from elsewhere that they wish to share to enhance the Committee's work; and
  - Consider how the Committee might wish to develop in future to meet its Terms of Reference as effectively as possible.

4. In discussion the following comments were made:

a. PEC documents – length and content:

- i. Members were concerned about the substantial number of detailed papers submitted for the Committee's consideration. It was suggested that the papers could be shorter and, if required, where there were references to previous and/or related documents appendices or relevant links should be included to avoid repetition.
- ii. It was suggested that papers could be summarised and formatted so that key information is highlighted at the top of the paper and easier to retrieve.
- iii. It was suggested that where a topic is considered 'non-controversial' the oral introduction to the item could be omitted.
- iv. It was noted that over time there had been a marked improvement in the number of documents circulated to the Committee prior to meetings. It was also noted that the circulation of documents for recent meetings had been earlier, and the papers shorter with more use of signposting and appendices which was welcomed.
- v. It was noted that newer members of the Committee considered the level of detail provided in the papers helpful and reassuring as the information gave context to the topics allowing the opportunity to familiarise themselves more quickly with the Committee's business.
- vi. It was recognised that in preparing and producing the reports for the Committee a substantial amount of information is provided but the process, from the agenda to the finalised document, is comprehensive and rigorous to ensure the relevant information is provided to the PEC as well as being available to and meeting the requirements of the OEIs and

stakeholders. It should also be noted that the business interest of the OEIs must also be taken into account in relation to what is published on the public and private agendas. Achieving the correct balance to ensure the appropriate level of detail for the required discussions and decision making process while reducing the length of the reports is not easy to achieve, but the Executive and staff team had improved how reports and supporting information are presented and would continue to consider and develop the appropriate levels of reporting to ensure the Committee continues to meet its remit.

- vii. It was suggested areas which have been identified as a challenge will become simpler once a common set of standards have been established reducing the requirement for detailed, explicit evidence and, therefore, a reduction in documentation.
  - viii. The Chair informed members she would circulate the Good Governance Institute's publication 'How to ask the right questions' which offers guidance on the subject. She suggested that when writing a paper, the following should be considered by the author and the reader:
    - What is the paper?
    - Why is it being presented?
    - How would the presenter like the reader to engage with the paper?
    - What value can the reader's questions add?
- b. Purpose of the Committee and the relationship with the OEIs:
- i. Members considered that the role of the Committee was to act as a 'sub' Council to feed into policy issues and matters pertaining to Council and to scrutinise issues relating to quality assurance and the OEIs.
  - ii. It is important to recognise that the Committee and the Executive are part of a team working towards the same goals.
  - iii. In relation to the OEIs it should be recognised that there is a degree of tension in where the Committee, the OEIs, and the Executive sit and how the relationships impact on the provision of assurance, objectivity and independence in reporting.
  - iv. It was suggested that the key to maintain the relationships between administrative/governing bodies was good governance and trust. As a committee it is important to ask the right questions in a way that fosters trust and does not imply mistrust of the institution or stakeholder in question.
  - v. It was suggested that the members might consider some self-reflection on the contributions made at Committee meetings and how comments have been received and considered.
  - vi. It was acknowledged that each member brings specific knowledge and opinions to meetings and should consider if they were offering knowledge, qualified opinion, or personal opinion especially when considered in the context of the OEIs and how individuals interact with questions.

c. Meeting frequency and Training:

- i. It was agreed that an annual PEC training day would be useful for members to:
  - o to refresh and re-enforce the purpose and aims of the Committee;
  - o to consider the Committee's responsibilities and perspectives;
  - o to consider issues of relevance to the Committee within the GOsC; and
  - o to give members the opportunity to meet outside of the Committee setting.
- ii. It was recognised that increasing the meeting frequency, including a PEC development session, would be of benefit to members and to the GOsC, providing a number of options in how the Committee conducts its business. The aim would be to strengthen the committee and to minimise any additional pressure on staff workload.
- iii. It was agreed that the meeting frequency and spacing required consideration and that the number of meetings should match that of Council. It was noted that there have been discussions with the Chair of Council to consider how the meetings of Council and its committees can be better aligned including consideration of an additional date for the PEC.
- iv. It was suggested that the move to holding the public and private sessions of the Committee over a two-day period had worked well and members views on whether this should continue after the easing of the pandemic restrictions would be welcomed.

5. The Chair summarised the discussion:

- a. The Committee and the Executive work to very high standards and is a challenge when considering development and enhancement where things might not be working so well.
- b. There were areas of the summary which were less cohesive; the purpose of the Committee, terms of reference, and terms of reference as enacted. There is space to refine how the Committee works and should be considered further.
- c. The speed at which the Executive had responded to feedback and the openness and suggestions was noted and welcomed.
- d. It was suggested that the discussions on the summary and reflections should be revisited in the Autumn, but members were welcome to feedback directly prior to the next meeting.

**Noted: The Chair will circulate the Good Governance Guide to PEC members and the Executive.**

**Noted: The Committee would revisit how the Committee is working at the meeting in October.**