

MEETING: 13 AUGUST 2020**REPORT BY: SECRETARY TO THE COMMISSION****COMMISSION MEETING ARRANGEMENTS 2021**

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to propose meeting arrangements for the Commission for 2021.

Background

2. The Commission has in its Strategy a commitment to continuously improve how it does its business and to consider how it can manage better its business. It is customary in August of each year for the Commission to agree its meeting arrangements for the subsequent calendar year.
3. At its meeting in June, the Commission agreed a way forward for planning Commission business and considering its strategy in the light of the Covid-19 emergency, including:
 - Meeting virtually and more frequently
 - Revisiting its team development activities
 - Prioritising 'public-facing' business to be considered at formal meetings
 - More informal consideration of other business
 - Recording (and making such recordings publicly available) of formal public meetings of the Commission.

Commission business

4. Scotland is amidst stage 3 of the recovery period from lockdown. While this provides some clarity about easing of lockdown arrangements, it is difficult to clarify what this may mean for how the Commission does its business in coming months, especially into 2021.
5. Currently, Audit Scotland continues to work on the basis that staff work remotely, and thus access to Audit Scotland offices remains restricted. I will continue to liaise with Audit Scotland as the recovery period continues. There is however a strong likelihood that such restrictions will remain at least until the end of the year.
6. Consequently, this paper reflects a working assumption that the first principle above – meeting and working virtually and more frequently – will remain in place into 2021. If this changes, then it will be possible to adapt accordingly.

Commission meeting arrangements

7. The main features of the proposal are:
 - Commission members are asked to commit to two slots per month.
 - These slots will be used for a combination of:
 - Formal meetings of the Commission and its committees

- Commission insight programme (see below)
- Commission development programme (see below).
- For meetings of the Commission and its committees, the following assumptions are made:
 - On business days, all Commission business will start at 9.30am and finish at 1pm at the latest, with suitable breaks included to ensure around three hours being devoted to Commission business.
 - For a formal Commission meeting, we will aim to complete the meeting within two hours and any balance used for other activities.
 - We will aim to avoid using the second slot each month for formal Commission meeting business – this will only be done in exceptional circumstances. The second slot each month will be used for committee business (when such a meeting is scheduled) and a combination of insight and team development sessions.
 - Quarterly committee meetings will be retained. An optional slot will be used only for committee business in exceptional circumstances.
 - Committees meet on the same day with meetings lasting an hour, with the Financial Audit and Assurance Committee meeting at 9.30am and the Performance Audit Committee starting at 10.45am. An hour ‘insight’ session will also take place at 12 noon on those days.
- Commission pre-meetings will take place – lasting one hour – on a separate day, likely the day before.
- We will continue to use July as a ‘recess’ month.
- Two strategy seminar slots are included – the first is an overnight event in the spring and the second ‘mid-year’ event in an afternoon in Autumn (see below).
- In recent years we have used one committee meeting slot to meet in Audit Scotland’s Glasgow office. It is proposed to commit to continuing this practice, depending on the arrangements in place in response to Covid-19.

8. The attached Appendix proposes a schedule of meetings for 2021.

Commission insight and development programmes

9. Commission members have considered separately proposals for a Commission ‘insight’ programme to allow the Commission to develop its strategic perspective and insight in coming months leading up to a revised Strategy. They have also considered proposals for a team development programme. Both of these programmes will be taken forward as part of the proposed meeting schedule. This are reported in the Secretary report elsewhere on the agenda of today’s meeting.

Conducting our business

10. It has been practice in recent years to include in committee meeting days a session with a visiting speaker. The past year, however, has meant that such sessions were largely put in abeyance because of other pressing business. A number of speaker subjects, therefore, were not fulfilled, including: poverty and inequalities; the Scottish Crown Estate; and health and social care integration authorities.
11. It is likely that the Commission insight and development programmes will absorb all of the Commission’s time in coming months. It is proposed, therefore, that the visiting speaker schedule continue in abeyance, but noting the above schedule of subjects for

possible revisiting at a point in the future. Indeed, some of the subjects proposed in the schedule can be picked up as part of the Commission's engagement with stakeholders in its 'Insight' programme in coming months.

12. The Commission is asked to consider if there is anything else in its current meeting arrangements that it would like to review.

Strategy seminars

13. The Commission has previously refined its approach to planning its business throughout the year. Most notably, it has agreed to retain two strategy events in the year, in Spring and Autumn.
14. The Spring event would be an overnight event with two overall purposes: firstly to review progress in the past year and agree broad themes for further development with a view to reflecting these in the next iteration of the work programme the following year; and secondly for team development activities. This year, the Commission's 'insight' programme will also play a significant role in the event. (The overnight nature of the event is subject to developments with the Covid-19 emergency – an overnight arrangement will only be used if restrictions have been suitably relaxed and it is safe to do so.)
15. The Autumn event would be to further define these themes – with a view to feeding either into the planning guidance for the current year (published in October) or the work programme (published in the following Spring).
16. The proposed meeting schedule reflects this commitment. It does however allow the opportunity for the Commission to undertake more such strategic thinking beyond these two events.

Conclusion

17. The Commission is invited to consider the proposed schedule and arrangements for meetings of the Commission and its committees in 2021.

Paul Reilly
Secretary to the Accounts Commission
17 July 2020

ACCOUNTS COMMISSION**MEETING SCHEDULE 2021**

| | |
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| 14 January | Accounts Commission |
| 28 January | <i>Second date: Commission insight session</i> |
| 11 February | Accounts Commission |
| 25 February | Committees and Commission insight session |
| 11 March | Accounts Commission |
| 25 March | <i>Second date: Commission insight session</i> |
| 15 April | Accounts Commission (Easter is Sunday 4 April) |
| 20 & 21 April | Strategy Seminar |
| 29 April | Committees and Commission insight session |
| 13 May | Accounts Commission |
| 27 May | Committees |
| 10 June | Accounts Commission |
| 24 June | <i>Second date</i> |
| 11 August | Mid-year strategy seminar |
| 12 August | Accounts Commission |
| 26 August | Committees |
| 9 September | Accounts Commission |
| 23 September | <i>Second date</i> |
| 7 October | Accounts Commission |
| 21 October | <i>Second date</i> |
| 11 November | Accounts Commission |
| 25 November | Committees |
| 9 December | Accounts Commission |