LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Executive summary

1. This paper builds on the work LG has been undertaking in relation to developing its leadership capacity and sets the scene for further workshops on 27 November and 22 January. LG is not asked to take any decisions on the issues highlighted below, but to use those issues to continue the discussion on the type and style of leadership it wants to adopt and to develop across the organisation.

Issues and Options

2. LG members participated in a workshop on leadership development on 30 October. That workshop focused on individual strengths and collective approaches to decision making. Much of the discussion centred on what LG is for and this theme was continued at a Leadership Group meeting on 5 November. Four interconnected areas have presented themselves as central to developing capacity and LG is invited to discuss these further in advance of the next workshop on 27 November.

Role Clarity

3. LG is agreed that clarity of roles, both individually and collectively, is key to firstly designing the correct processes around our decision-making and ultimately the behaviours we wish to adopt and promote in doing so.

4. As a start, LG agreed that we need to move away from the current published purpose of Leadership Group which is:

The Leadership Group (LG) is the Scottish Parliament's senior management group. It aims to support and advise the Clerk/Chief Executive in defining and delivering the aim and values of the organisation and its strategic priorities and in developing the strategy to achieve these. It also enables senior colleagues to share expertise and knowledge and to contribute their views on how the organisation should be run, both currently and with an eye to the longer term.

LG further agreed that in moving away from this stated purpose, it should recognise the reality which is a more direct decision-making role and clear responsibility for leading the organisation, rather than doing so at one remove via the Chief Executive.

5. As a consequence of these discussions, LG is beginning to focus on a stated role along the following lines:

LG should lead the organisation by:

- Setting the strategic direction;

- Monitoring performance at a strategic level, taking into account operational performance, delivery, capacity and prioritisation;
• Acting as custodian of its aims and values, including leadership, management and change best practice; and

• Taking decisions, managing risk and seizing opportunities.

6. This working definition can be fine-tuned as LG continues its discussions. It is suggested that in the spirit of creating clarity, LG takes time to consider what is meant by each aspect of the draft role and how it will be delivered in practice.

7. An important contribution to the aim of creating clarity will be the mapping exercise currently being undertaken by Michelle Hegarty and Andy Munro. This will seek to capture LG’s relationship with the strategic boards it sponsors. LG may wish to take the opportunity provided by the output of this exercise to renew its delegations to each board and to strengthen support and feedback mechanisms relevant to each. LG should thereafter expand this thinking to other parts of the organisation, such as the SPCB, the Bureau, PO, Members and political parties.

8. At a future point, LG may wish to take this further by considering what goes on outwith formal structures and consider the conversations and decisions in this space that contribute to achieving LG’s purpose and aims.

Values

9. Closely aligned with clarity of roles is the values that we espouse and promote in everything we do. LG is aware that a separate piece of work into refreshing our values is underway in collaboration with colleagues from across the organisation. Having clear values that are promoted by senior managers and demonstrated in the way we work is crucial to building trust and promoting the constructive debate that will improve the quality of decisions we take and develop the staff group we lead.

10. One theme that has emerged from the collaboration with colleagues on values and behaviours is the notion of custodianship or stewardship. This is reflected in the separate work that LG has done on its role as reflected in the third bullet at paragraph 5 above. LG may wish to ask the group to consider further the benefits of capturing this as a corporate value and how it will be demonstrated in the organisation of our work.

11. In the spring, LG will be presented with a values framework that matches what we do with how we do it. The framework will seek to align values to our vision and strategic objectives and capture those positive behaviours that will ensure our commitment to those values. This will include strengthening those behaviours in how we recruit, develop and retain our staff, how we provide services to our Members and how we engage with the people we serve.

Empowerment

12. LG’s discussions on leadership to date have included consideration of how we empower our staff and how we aim to support decisions being taken at the most appropriate levels in the organisation. LG may recall discussing this in relation to a
range of staff management policies in November 2015 (see LG (2015) Paper 064). As a first step, Group Heads may wish to consider whether these changes are embedded in their areas. LG may then wish to consider wider decision-making in different settings. Issues that require to be addressed include:

- The tensions between our commitment to high quality services and risks in allowing decisions to be taken further down the chain;
- Managers retaining a role in delegated initiatives due to a desire to be associated with high profile or successful pieces of work;
- The relationship between technical or professional roles and the corporate strategy.

13. At the same time as looking at practices in groups and offices, LG members may wish to consider in the first place whether they feel sufficiently empowered by the Chief Executive. Group Heads may then wish to consider further whether their delegations are impacted (either positively or negatively) by the mentoring and coaching role played by Assistant Chief Executives.

14. This consideration could be developed in tandem with the discussions on role clarity referred to above. Examining how we interact at LG level will allow us a deeper understanding of the levels of empowerment we should be championing across the organisation.

**Dialogue**

15. Finally, LG may want to reflect further on the role of high quality dialogue in our decision-making processes. Some issues that have been raised in relation to current levels of consideration include:

- suggestions that issues can be brought for LG consideration after having been worked up to implementation level elsewhere, thereby reducing LG’s role to marginal tweaks or rubber-stamping;
- overdue deference on issues to technical experts or lead officials;
- “group think” behaviour in line with the loudest or most persistent voices.

16. Questions for LG in this area are therefore about whether we ensure sufficient dialogue around issues before proceeding to make decisions. Are we allocating enough time to hear a diverse range of voices? Do we tolerate alternative views sufficiently? Do we create an environment in which individuals can be confident enough to raise opposing views, suggestions and ideas? Are we always speaking to the right people? Do we value decisive action above deeper consideration and reflection?

17. As stated at the outset, the issues presented for discussion in this paper are interrelated. We have begun to engage positively with these and other issues and this discussion will help shape where we would like to be and how we get there.
Resource Implications
18. There are no resource implications from this paper.

Dependencies
19. Successful development of leadership skills and capacity depends on LG members fully engaging with the programme and committing to seeing it through to tangible outcomes.

Governance issues
20. Leadership capacity and capability is the responsibility of Leadership Group. Improving that capacity will improve governance in and of the organisation.

Publication Scheme
21. This paper can be published.

Next steps
22. Leadership Group will continue these discussions in a facilitated workshop on 27 November.

Decision
23. No decisions are sought at this stage.

David McGill
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