Public Engagement Strategy

Executive Summary

1. This note updates LG about recent developments in public engagement, particularly the agreement of a new Public Engagement Strategy and the implementation of the Commission on Parliamentary Reform recommendations.

2. Members of the Strategic Resources Board and the Constitutional Issues Board are already sighted on these issues. However, in keeping with recent discussions at Leadership Group about the work of the various boards, the purpose of this note is to provide some more detail around governance arrangements and operational delivery.

3. The SPCB will be invited to consider and approve the Public Engagement Strategy at its next meeting.

Issues and Options

4. The Public Engagement Board (PEB) reviewed the Public Engagement Strategy over the summer. This refresh of the Strategy is a further evolution in the approach that has occurred since the 2014 Referendum, with ever-closer focus on engagement work that supports and strengthens the business of Parliament.

Public Engagement Governance

5. PEB’s membership comprises four Group Heads (Callum Thomson, Susan Duffy, Tracey White and Alan Balharrie) and, currently, the two chairs of the Public Engagement Group (PEG).

6. Since April 2016 there has been a 50/50 gender balance on PEB.

7. PEG comprises representatives across the offices that are most closely engaged with public engagement work. One of its roles is to determine operational priorities – the key activities – to deliver on the strategy determined by PEB.

8. PEB has recently finalised the Strategy (included as an Annex) and the delivery plan which has been developed by PEG. Performance is monitored through a combination of KPIs, reported through quarterly performance reporting and regular progress reports on PEG key activities, for example Visit Parliament and Visit Experience which are discussed below.
9. PEG has reviewed its own governance over the summer, with one of the outcomes being that from January 2018 it will move to a rotating leadership model with a Chair and Deputy Chair. Each will be in post for 12 months, with the expectation that the Deputy Chair becomes the Chair after 12 months as Deputy. It is intended that this model gives colleagues at Grade 5/Grade 6 an opportunity to develop leadership skills, at the same time as giving continuity for operational delivery of engagement activities. Both the Chair and Deputy Chair are members of PEB. From January, Roy Devon will be Chair with Emma Armstrong taking on the Deputy Chair role.

10. Leadership Group is invited to note these arrangements in light of recent discussions around leadership development in the SPS.

Public Engagement Strategic Goals

Implement all engagement recommendations from the report of the Commission for Parliamentary Reform.

11. As part of the refresh, there were originally three strategic goals and these are discussed below. To a large extent, PEB’s view was that these encapsulated the key themes that were articulated by the Commission. However, PEB wanted to recognise the importance of the Commission’s work and, importantly, to set a clear direction that implementation of the engagement recommendations should be seen as an operational priority. Accordingly, this strategic priority was added.

12. Most of the individual recommendations sit at an office level, while a handful of others will sit with the new Committee Engagement Unit – in essence those recommendations with a strong change management element. It is intended that this unit will be established for the start of 2018/19.

Effective public participation in the business of Parliament

13. This goal is a clear signal of the importance of issues-based engagement, principally through the work of committees. Put simply, by focussing on engaging with the Scottish public on issues that matter to them, this makes for more robust parliamentary scrutiny.

14. It also provides the vehicle to engage in a form of political participation because of the connection to a particular subject matter rather than any particular interest in party politics or parliamentary democracy, per se. (This reflects research that we have undertaken and is also in line with practices in other UK legislatures.)

15. As a business-as-usual activity, the main way in which this work is taken forward is through engagement plans for all significant committee business.

16. This strategic goal is in full alignment with the Commission. Delivery of this goal is dependent on collaborative work by colleagues across multiple offices and good progress has been made since the start of this parliamentary session.
17. This is noteworthy given the particular challenges of collaboration across offices in a business-as-usual context (as opposed to say in a project or campaigns environment) and also in the context of the demands presented by a weekly cycle for most parliamentary committees.

18. Effective collaboration between teams and colleagues from across offices is dependent on a number of factors. From a public engagement perspective, ingredients for success certainly include there being a culture of mutual respect for the insight, skills and professionalism of colleagues from across offices and, also, proper planning and an appreciation of parliamentary business cycles.

*Increased awareness of the relevance and accessibility of the Parliament, particularly in under-represented groups*

19. This goal links to the goal above but also has a wider remit. Multiple offices support this goal, whether that be public information, marketing, communications, social media, outreach or the visitor experience at Holyrood, or in local communities or online.

20. In terms of the visitor experience at Holyrood, PEG has established two key activities Visit Parliament and Visit Experience. PEB’s November meeting focussed on this work.

21. Visit Parliament is a marketing campaign designed to combat the falling visitor numbers at Holyrood (this has been a long term trend) and to raise awareness of the Parliament and its accessibility was also launched in April 2016. A range of KPIs are in place to monitor the success of this work, the flagship one being to increase visitor numbers by 5% in 17/18. Given the difficulties in making comparisons in individual monthly figures, in relation to the previous years, it will be necessary to see the full year data to evaluate the position. The position to October is a 3% increase on the position last year. Other KPIs point to our Visit Parliament website having an average 105% increase in traffic and free public tours running at 99% capacity (up from 74%).

22. A new Visitor Experience Strategy and Action Plan is currently being developed. This is a major piece of work and will comprise multiple strands. The work is being designed to complement the Visit Parliament work, for example through pursuit of VisitScotland accreditation. Another priority will be an evolution in how the Main Hall is used, to increase links to parliamentary business and involve the visiting public more in current issues being considered by the Parliament.

23. Similarly, the Major Events and Exhibitions annual programme is being reviewed to ensure that it too can better support the central theme of more effective public participation in parliamentary business. A recent good example of this is the hosting of the Scottish Youth Parliament in the Chamber and, particularly, the discussion of live issues currently being considered a number of our committees.
24. Finally, PEG has selected young people as our key ‘under-represented group’ in this iteration of the Public Engagement Strategy. The main delivery vehicle will be a programme of activities, under the banner of the Scotland-wide 2018: Year of Young People programme.

Staff with the capacity, knowledge and skills to meet changing needs and expectations

25. PEB fully supports the emphasis placed in the Strategic Plan on developing and investing in staff so there is the capacity and capability to deliver services in a changing environment. That is something that has a particular resonance in the context of public engagement, given the evolving nature of public expectations and consumer habits. This applies obviously in the fast-moving realm of digital engagement but also community based engagement, as highlighted in the Commission Report.

Resource Implications

26. The Public Engagement Strategy will be delivered on the basis of the office budgets that have been approved by SRB, and the costs for the establishment of the Committee Engagement Unit.

Dependencies

27. As discussed above, successful delivery of the Public Engagement Strategy will be dependent on a range of factors, principal of which is successful collaboration between colleagues across different offices, and the Committee Engagement Unit delivering on its change management remit.

Publication Scheme

28. This paper can be published in line with the SPCB’s Publication Scheme.

Communications

29. PEG and PEB work closely to support a free flow of communications. To aid wider understanding of the direction of travel, a snippet session for the wider SPS staff group will be run after the SPCB has agreed the Public Engagement Strategy.

Next steps

30. The SPCB will be invited to consider and agree the Public Engagement Strategy.

Decision

31. Leadership Group is invited to note the Public Engagement Strategy and the current main business being taken forward by PEB/PEG.

32. Leadership Group may wish to discuss some of the wider issues as they relate to organisational development in the SPS.
Callum Thomson  
Chair, Public Engagement Board  
24 November 2017
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose of the Scottish Parliament</th>
<th>Representing the people of Scotland by debating issues of national importance, passing legislation and holding the Scottish Government to account</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPS Aim on public engagement</td>
<td>Promoting engagement and participation to support and strengthen the work of the Parliament and to enhance parliamentary democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPS Priority on public engagement</td>
<td>Deliver public engagement activities that improve the quality and visibility of the work of the Parliament</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Public Engagement Strategy Goals  | Implement engagement recommendations from Commission on Parliamentary Reform | Effective public participation in the work of the Parliament  
[issues based engagement] | Increased awareness of the relevance and accessibility of the Parliament, particularly in under-represented groups | Staff with the capacity, knowledge and skills to meet changing needs and expectations |

| Delivery and Reporting Mechanisms | 1. Office activities: Responsibility of individual offices, by reference to impact in delivering Public Engagement Priorities  
(Evaluation through office plans: via quarterly discussion between Group Head and Office Head/Nominated Person; In addition, all office plans to be shared with PEG colleagues) | 2. PEG: Key activities – continuing work streams and projects – delivered collaboratively, by reference to impact in delivering Public Engagement Priorities  
(Evaluation against either KPIs or pre-set objectives, reporting through PEG/Performance Report, monitored by PEB) |
