

# **Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee**

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**Monday 11 November 2013 at 3.15 pm**

**To be held at the Town Hall, Pinstone  
Street, Sheffield, S1 2HH**

**The Press and Public are Welcome to Attend**

## **Membership**

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Councillors Chris Weldon (Chair), Ian Auckland, Penny Baker, Roger Davison,  
Gill Furniss, Cate McDonald, Mick Rooney and Andrew Sangar

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## PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE MEETING

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The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee comprises the Chairs and Deputy Chairs of the four Scrutiny Committees. Councillor Chris Weldon Chairs this Committee.

### Remit of the Committee

- Effective use of internal and external resources
- Performance against Corporate Plan Priorities
- Risk management
- Budget monitoring
- Strategic management and development of the scrutiny programme and process
- Identifying and co-ordinating cross scrutiny issues

A copy of the agenda and reports is available on the Council's website at [www.sheffield.gov.uk](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk). You can also see the reports to be discussed at the meeting if you call at the First Point Reception, Town Hall, Pinstone Street entrance. The Reception is open between 9.00 am and 5.00 pm, Monday to Thursday and between 9.00 am and 4.45 pm. on Friday, or you can ring on telephone no. 2734552. You may not be allowed to see some reports because they contain confidential information. These items are usually marked \* on the agenda.

Members of the public have the right to ask questions or submit petitions to Scrutiny Committee meetings and recording is allowed under the direction of the Chair. Please see the website or contact Democratic Services for further information regarding public questions and petitions and details of the Council's protocol on audio/visual recording and photography at council meetings.

Scrutiny Committee meetings are normally open to the public but sometimes the Committee may have to discuss an item in private. If this happens, you will be asked to leave. Any private items are normally left until last. If you would like to attend the meeting please report to the First Point Reception desk where you will be directed to the meeting room.

If you require any further information about this Scrutiny Committee, please contact Matthew Borland, Policy and Improvement Officer, on 0114 27 35065 or email [matthew.borland@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:matthew.borland@sheffield.gov.uk)

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## FACILITIES

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There are public toilets available, with wheelchair access, on the ground floor of the Town Hall. Induction loop facilities are available in meeting rooms.

Access for people with mobility difficulties can be obtained through the ramp on the side to the main Town Hall entrance.

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**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE AGENDA  
11 NOVEMBER 2013**

**Order of Business**

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- 1. Welcome and Housekeeping Arrangements**
- 2. Apologies for Absence**
- 3. Exclusion of Public and Press**  
To identify items where resolutions may be moved to exclude the press and public
- 4. Declarations of Interest**  
Members to declare any interests they have in the business to be considered at the meeting
- 5. Minutes of Previous Meetings**  
To approve the minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 13 February and 15 May 2013
- 6. Public Questions and Petitions**  
To receive any questions or petitions from members of the public
- 7. Sheffield City Council Electoral Review: Update on Review Preparation and Discussion Paper on Council Size**  
Report of the Director of Policy, Performance and Communications

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## ADVICE TO MEMBERS ON DECLARING INTERESTS AT MEETINGS

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A new Standards regime was introduced on 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2012 by the Localism Act 2011. The new regime made changes to the way that your interests needed to be registered and declared. Prejudicial and personal interests no longer exist and they have been replaced by Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPIs).

The Act also required that provision is made for interests which are not Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and required the Council to introduce a new local Code of Conduct for Members. Provision has been made in the new Code for dealing with “personal” interests.

Guidance on declarations of interest, incorporating regulations published by the Government in relation to Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, has been circulated to you previously, and has been published on the Council’s website as a downloadable document at -<http://councillors.sheffield.gov.uk/councillors/register-of-councillors-interests>

If at all possible, you should try to identify any potential interest you may have before the meeting so that you and the person you ask for advice can fully consider all the circumstances before reaching a conclusion on what action you should take.

Further advice can be obtained from Lynne Bird, Director of Legal Services on 0114 2734018 or email [lynne.bird@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:lynne.bird@sheffield.gov.uk)

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## ADVICE TO MEMBERS ON DECLARING INTERESTS AT MEETINGS

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New standards arrangements were introduced by the Localism Act 2011. The new regime made changes to the way that members' interests are registered and declared.

If you are present at a meeting of the Council, of its executive or any committee of the executive, or of any committee, sub-committee, joint committee, or joint sub-committee of the authority, and you have a **Disclosable Pecuniary Interest** (DPI) relating to any business that will be considered at the meeting, you must not:

- participate in any discussion of the business at the meeting, or if you become aware of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interest during the meeting, participate further in any discussion of the business, or
- participate in any vote or further vote taken on the matter at the meeting.

These prohibitions apply to any form of participation, including speaking as a member of the public.

You **must**:

- leave the room (in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct)
- make a verbal declaration of the existence and nature of any DPI at any meeting at which you are present at which an item of business which affects or relates to the subject matter of that interest is under consideration, at or before the consideration of the item of business or as soon as the interest becomes apparent.
- declare it to the meeting and notify the Council's Monitoring Officer within 28 days, if the DPI is not already registered.

If you have any of the following pecuniary interests, they are your **disclosable pecuniary interests** under the new national rules. You have a pecuniary interest if you, or your spouse or civil partner, have a pecuniary interest.

- Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain, which you, or your spouse or civil partner, undertakes.
- Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from your council or authority) made or provided within the relevant period\* in respect of any expenses incurred by you in carrying out duties as a member, or towards your election expenses. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.

\*The relevant period is the 12 months ending on the day when you tell the Monitoring Officer about your disclosable pecuniary interests.

- Any contract which is made between you, or your spouse or your civil partner (or a body in which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, has a beneficial interest) and your council or authority -
  - under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and
  - which has not been fully discharged.
- Any beneficial interest in land which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, have and which is within the area of your council or authority.
- Any licence (alone or jointly with others) which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, holds to occupy land in the area of your council or authority for a month or longer.
- Any tenancy where (to your knowledge) -
  - the landlord is your council or authority; and
  - the tenant is a body in which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, has a beneficial interest.
- Any beneficial interest which you, or your spouse or your civil partner has in securities of a body where -
  - (a) that body (to your knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of your council or authority; and
  - (b) either -
    - the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or
    - if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.

If you attend a meeting at which any item of business is to be considered and you are aware that you have a **personal interest** in the matter which does not amount to a DPI, you must make verbal declaration of the existence and nature of that interest at or before the consideration of the item of business or as soon as the interest becomes apparent. You should leave the room if your continued presence is incompatible with the 7 Principles of Public Life (selflessness; integrity; objectivity; accountability; openness; honesty; and leadership).

You have a personal interest where –

- a decision in relation to that business might reasonably be regarded as affecting the well-being or financial standing (including interests in

land and easements over land) of you or a member of your family or a person or an organisation with whom you have a close association to a greater extent than it would affect the majority of the Council Tax payers, ratepayers or inhabitants of the ward or electoral area for which you have been elected or otherwise of the Authority's administrative area, or

- it relates to or is likely to affect any of the interests that are defined as DPIs but are in respect of a member of your family (other than a partner) or a person with whom you have a close association.

Guidance on declarations of interest, incorporating regulations published by the Government in relation to Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, has been circulated to you previously, and has been published on the Council's website as a downloadable document at -<http://councillors.sheffield.gov.uk/councillors/register-of-councillors-interests>

You should identify any potential interest you may have relating to business to be considered at the meeting. This will help you and anyone that you ask for advice to fully consider all the circumstances before deciding what action you should take.

In certain circumstances the Council may grant a **dispensation** to permit a Member to take part in the business of the Authority even if the member has a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest relating to that business.

To obtain a dispensation, you must write to the Monitoring Officer at least 48 hours before the meeting in question, explaining why a dispensation is sought and desirable, and specifying the period of time for which it is sought. The Monitoring Officer may consult with the Independent Person or the Council's Standards Committee in relation to a request for dispensation.

Further advice can be obtained from Lynne Bird, Director of Legal Services on 0114 2734018 or email [lynne.bird@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:lynne.bird@sheffield.gov.uk)

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Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

Meeting held 13 February 2013

**PRESENT:** Councillors Chris Weldon (Chair), Ian Auckland, Penny Baker, Roger Davison, Gill Furniss, Helen Mirfin-Boukouris, Mick Rooney and Andrew Sangar

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**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

1.1 There were no apologies for absence.

**2. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

2.1 No items were identified where a resolution may be moved to exclude the public and press.

**3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

**4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

4.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee held on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2012, were approved as a correct record, subject to the recording of an apology for Councillor Helen Mirfin-Boukouris at item 1 (Apologies for Absence).

**5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS**

5.1 *Cessation of the Provision and Fitting of Small Items of Daily Living Equipment Costing Less Than £50*

In response to a question submitted on behalf of the Sheffield Royal Society for the Blind, Councillor Bryan Lodge reported that this was just one of the many difficult budgetary decisions which the Council had had to make and added that this was an extension of the decision made in 1999 which, under the new proposal, would extend to items where there was an element of fitting required. He also indicated that support would be provided for those people with extreme difficulties.

Councillor Mick Rooney added that this issue would be included on the agenda of the Healthier Communities and Adult Social Care Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee at the earliest opportunity.

**6. CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND REVENUE BUDGET APPROVAL 2013/14**

6.1 The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director, Resources, on the 2013/14 Capital Programme and the joint report of the Chief Executive and the

Executive Director, Resources, on the Revenue Budget 2013/14, which were to be considered by Cabinet on the afternoon of 13<sup>th</sup> February 2013.

- 6.2 In attendance for this item were Councillor Bryan Lodge (Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources), Councillor Isobel Bowler (Cabinet Member for Culture, Sport and Leisure), Councillor Robert Murphy, Eugene Walker (Director of Finance), Allan Rainford (Resources Team), Joe Fowler (Director of Communications and Performance), Bev Coukham (Communities Portfolio), Mick Crofts (Place Portfolio) and John Doyle (Children, Young People and Families Portfolio).
- 6.3 Eugene Walker introduced the two reports and explained that this was the third year of budget reductions which now amounted to the cumulative sum of £180m and added that the year 2014/15 was likely to prove even more difficult. He also referred to changes in local government finance, the reduction in the Council Tax benefit grant and the difficulties caused by the late announcement of the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement. These factors had made it difficult to work out potential impacts, but a budget had been arrived at to enable Members to make the necessary decisions. He considered that this was a robust budget which contained a proper review of savings and reserves.
- 6.4 Councillor Bryan Lodge also referred to the late announcement of the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement and highlighted the difficulties in making these spending decisions.
- 6.5 In response to Members' questions, the following points were made:-
- The budgetary process for 2014/15 had not started yet and it was possible that some further level of efficiencies could be achieved. There were always changes in situations but it appeared that local authorities were being asked to cut furthest and fastest.
  - Members were looking at the structure of services and it was necessary to look at the best way of delivering these, but this was getting harder over the years. The level of officer strength and expertise was recognised.
  - It was important to note that the budget set the framework for service operation, with the exact detail of service changes being subject to consultation and discussion with the services involved. The Council had a process that interwove finance with policy and decision-making and its implementation could be monitored.
  - The grant settlement in relation to the transfer of the Public Health function from the Primary Care Trust had only been received in January 2013, and officers were currently assessing this. The settlement contained some relatively generous elements and a report would be presented to Cabinet to set out how this funding could be spent. It should also be noted that some of the grant was designed to help the Council achieve its own public health objectives.

- The transfer of the Public Health function to the Council, involved a not insignificant proportion of statutory services, but the Council had some discretion as to their provision.
- Members experiencing any conflict between their role as Members of the Council and the South Yorkshire Pensions Authority should obtain legal advice from the Pensions Authority.
- Where contracts had been transferred from the Health Service to the Council, the Council would consider its own priorities in relation to their implementation.
- It was not intended to give the impression that there was any slack in the system, it was just that the Council was a large organisation and could always improve. It was also possible that external circumstances could change, so it could never be said that savings could not be made.
- There had not been a national announcement in relation to the funding of care provision.
- The interdependence between the Primary Care Trust, the Teaching Hospitals and the Council was recognised, with each organisation having its own pressures.
- The budget set the financial framework within which the Council was to operate and decisions would have to be taken on the detail of the precise effect of the cuts which were having to be made.
- There were no proposals to increase car parking charges at local centres.
- Whilst the increases in allotment rents looked large, they were minimal in terms of the actual monetary increases.
- The Cultural Trusts had agreed a level of saving and had also come to an agreement regarding services and opening hours.
- The full detail of changes to the Early Years Service was awaited and it should be borne in mind that the budget set the framework for this Service with any proposals being set within this. A decision on this Service had been made at the Children, Young People and Family Support Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee and this would be presented to Cabinet later that day.
- There were to be some funding reductions to community groups, Sheffield Futures and in relation to Youth Involvement. More detail could be found on these in the Budget Implementation Plans.
- Discussions would be held with the appropriate Council service in relation to outdoor educational centres provision.

- There was a legal challenge in process relating to some of the VAT recovery in the Building Schools for the Future Programme, but it should be noted that the affordability gap had decreased. This gap would require funding and it was hoped to avoid borrowing and rely on capital receipts for this.
- Some funding from the Local Transport Plan Programme had been earmarked for use on initiatives such as the Better Buses Fund.

6.6 In response to questions from Councillor Robert Murphy, the following points were made:-

- Discussions were taking place with Health Service partners in relation to the provision of social care and it was acknowledged that the priority was what was best for the individual. The criteria for fair access to care was set at critical and substantial, and it was felt that if this was set at critical only then people would be put at risk.
- There were difficulties in looking at savings on external contracts due to their long term nature, but it should be noted that spending was lower on information, communications and technology than a few years ago and discussions were taking place in relation to savings on the Veolia Waste Management contract.

6.7 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the contents of the report of the Executive Director, Resources, on the 2013/14 Capital Programme Budget, and the joint report of the Chief Executive and the Executive Director, Resources, on the Revenue Budget 2013/14, together with the comments made and the responses provided; and
- (b) recommends that the report of the Executive Director, Resources, on the 2013/14 Capital Programme Budget, and the joint report of the Chief Executive and the Executive Director, Resources, on the Revenue Budget 2013/14, be submitted to Cabinet without amendment.

**SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL**

**Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee**

**Meeting held 15 May 2013**

**PRESENT:** Councillors Chris Weldon (Chair), Ian Auckland, Penny Baker, Roger Davison, Gill Furniss, Cate McDonald, Mick Rooney and Andrew Sangar

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**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

1.1 There were no apologies for absence.

**2. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR**

2.1 RESOLVED: That Councillor Chris Weldon be appointed Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee.

**3. TO FIX DAY AND TIME OF MEETING**

3.1 RESOLVED: That meetings of the Committee be held as and when required on dates and times to be determined by the Chair.

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## Report to Scrutiny Management Committee

**11th November 2013**

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**Report of:** Director of Policy, Performance and Communications

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**Subject:** Summary of the evidence presented to Scrutiny Management Committee in relation to the size of Sheffield City Council and proposed submission on council size

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**Author of Report:** Victoria Penman, Policy and Improvement Officer  
0114 27 34755  
[victoria.penman@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:victoria.penman@sheffield.gov.uk)

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**Summary:**

Sheffield City Council will be the subject of an electoral review to be carried out by the Local Government Boundary Commission. The first part of this review will decide the number of councillors to be returned to the Council, and the Council is developing its submission to inform the Commission. On 11<sup>th</sup> July, Scrutiny Management Committee heard evidence from organisations and members of the public as to the most appropriate number. This report summarises the evidence received by the Committee.

The report is accompanied by the draft submission on Council size which has been informed by the evidence heard by the Committee.

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**Type of item:**

Reviewing of existing policy	
Informing the development of new policy	
Statutory consultation	
Performance / budget monitoring report	
Cabinet request for scrutiny	
Full Council request for scrutiny	
Community Assembly request for scrutiny	
Call-in of Cabinet decision	
Briefing paper for the Scrutiny Committee	
Other	X

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**Scrutiny Management Committee:**

- i. is asked to note and approve the contents of the report;
- ii. is asked to provide views or comments on the draft submission on Council size ;
- iii. is asked to approve the draft submission on Council size and refer it to Full Council prior to its submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

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**Background Papers:**

None

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**Category of Report:** OPEN

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# Sheffield City Council electoral review: update on review preparation and discussion paper on Council size

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## 1. Purpose

- 1.1. This report provides a summary of the evidence received by the Scrutiny Management Committee both in writing and verbally at the evidence gathering session held on 11<sup>th</sup> July 2013. The report is accompanied by the draft submission on Council size which has been informed by the evidence heard by the Committee, and which the Committee is asked to approve and refer to Full Council.

## 2. Summary

- 2.1. The report summarises the evidence of eleven organisations and individuals which was received by the Scrutiny Management Committee in relation to the electoral review of Sheffield City Council, and in particular in relation to the number of councillors which it is recommended should make up the Council (the council size).
- 2.2. The Council Size submission is the proposed submission of Sheffield City Council to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England on the appropriate number of councillors to be returned to the Council. It proposes that the Sheffield City Council should continue to be comprised of 84 councillors, representing 28 wards. The submission also contains the Council's rationale for this proposal.

## 3. Introduction

- 3.1. Sheffield City Council will be the subject of an electoral review between August 2013 and March 2015. This has been called by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (the Commission) because the electorate of Central ward is now 42% larger than the Sheffield ward average. The review takes place in two stages, both run by the Commission. The first stage starts in January 2014 and will consider the number of councillors to be returned to the Council, and the second stage the ward boundaries and names. A preliminary evidence gathering stage is currently underway and the Commission met with officers and elected members in July.
- 3.2. As part of the first stage of the review the Council has the opportunity to put forward a submission on the number of councillors that it thinks the Council needs in order to function effectively (the 'council size').

3.3. Although the Council is able to put forward its proposal, which will carry significant weight, the Commission will reach their own judgement based on the individual characteristics and needs of each local area, based on the following three criteria:

- the governance arrangements of the council and how it takes decisions across the broad range of its responsibilities.
- the council's scrutiny functions relating to its own decision making and the council's responsibilities to outside bodies.
- the representational role of councillors in the local community and how they engage with people, conduct casework and represent the council on local partner organisations.

3.4. The Council's submission addresses these points. Arguments are also put forward on the basis of reflecting communities and allowing for fairness of representation.

3.5. The Commission also asks the Council and local people to consider the number of councillors for the authority not simply in the context of the council's current arrangements, but also taking into consideration likely future trends or plans. In every review it carries out, the Commission aims to ensure its recommendations remain relevant for six to ten years and will aim to recommend a council size that delivers effective and convenient local government well after the completion of the electoral review.

3.6. The Commission's guidance explicitly references factors which it **will not** consider relevant:

- Financial considerations – the Commission believes that value for money can be best achieved by having the optimum number of councillors to enable the Council to function effectively (so, arguments based on reducing the Member allowances budget will not be taken into account);
- Comparisons with other local authorities – although Sheffield currently has relatively few councillors per head of population compared with the national average, other South Yorkshire authorities, and also to the seven other Core Cities (ratios tend to be broadly in line with electorate: the higher the electorate, the higher the number of electors per Councillor), this will not automatically be an indication that Sheffield should have more councillors.

3.7. The Council size submission has been developed over several months, involving councillors from all groups via interviews, questionnaires and focus groups. A detailed methodology and rationale for the proposal is included within the submission.

3.8. It is recommended by the Commission that, wherever possible, the political groups within a Council should seek to reach a shared view on the proposed size of the Council to maximise the chance of the local recommendation as to the appropriate size being implemented. In light of this, Scrutiny Management Committee is recommended to endorse the draft submission and recommend its referral to Full Council before it is submitted to the Commission.

3.9. The Commission will consult on the issue of council size during March and April 2014, reaching their final decision in May 2014. The second stage of the review, concerning the boundaries and names of wards, will take place between May 2014 and March 2015, before being implemented in 2016.

## **4. Evidence presented to Scrutiny Management Committee**

4.1. In order to inform the work taking place within Sheffield City Council to develop the Council's submission on Council size, 65 individuals and organisations were contacted and invited to provide evidence to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee. This included:

- the Sheffield branches of political parties achieving 10% or more of the vote in any Sheffield ward at the last election, as well as any independent candidate achieving the same percentage of the vote
- respondents to the Community Assembly consultation
- representative bodies from the VCF sector
- community organisations known to have an interest in issues of democracy
- academics specialising in local democracy and electoral geography
- individuals who have expressed an interest in the electoral review
- Parish councils and community forums

4.2. Evidence has been provided by eleven organisations and individuals, and eight organisations and individuals attended an informal evidence gathering session of the Committee held on 11<sup>th</sup> July 2013. This report summarises the evidence submitted as far as they relate to matters which can be considered by the review, namely the role of the councillor in Sheffield and the implications of this for the number of councillors in Sheffield City Council. Comments were also received about a number of specific boundary issues, and these will be taken into account when the Council develops a proposed scheme of wards in 2014.

4.3. The evidence gathering session was attended by Councillors Chris Weldon; Penny Baker; Jillian Creasy; Roger Davison; Gill Furniss; Cat McDonald and Mick Rooney. Witnesses attending were:

- Vicky Seddon (Sheffield for Democracy)
- Sharon Squires and Daniel Spicer (Sheffield First)
- Cllr Shaffaq Mohammed (Sheffield Liberal Democrat Party)
- Russell Cutts, Chairman (Sheffield Conservative Party)
- Jonathan Harston
- Ecclesfield Parish Council ( Cllr Dr John Bowden)
- Tony Slatcher (Sheffield Labour Party)

## ***Overall summary***

- 4.4. There was no desire from respondents for a reduction in the number of councillors, with respondents generally feeling that the current number was 'about right' and several respondents stating a preference for an increase in the number of councillors. Whilst some respondents recognised that the cost of democracy needs to be managed, reducing the number of councillors was not seen as the only way to do this.
- 4.5. Several respondents mentioned both that Sheffield has a relatively low number of councillors per head of population, although it was noted that the number of councillors fitted a pattern for Metropolitan councils, with the larger councils having progressively fewer councillors per head of population.
- 4.6. The role of the councillor in the community was the best understood of the councillor's roles, and something which respondents felt was particularly important, and particularly demanding. There was a general view that it was important for there to be enough councillors for communities to be able to engage effectively with their councillors, and that reducing the number of councillors would make this more difficult to do. Several witnesses referred to the change to ward based working arrangements, with a shared view that this would be likely to increase workloads for councillors.
- 4.7. Those witnesses who considered the role of the councillor beyond the community level noted the increasing complexities facing councillors, and the range of skills required to lead a large city as well as to be an effective ward councillor.
- 4.8. Several respondents indicated that retaining three member wards was important to allow for cover arrangements and to enable councillors with a variety of skills, expertise and diversity within wards, whilst two respondents suggested changing this number if it enabled communities to be more cohesive. In practice, as the council elects by thirds, the Commission is required by law to look to achieve a pattern of three member wards unless there are pressing reasons why this would not work.
- 4.9. Summaries of the evidence of individuals and organisations is provided below.

### **4.10. Bradway Action Group**

- One main function of the councillor is to help members of the local community to find the correct avenues through which to tackle problems.
- A second role is to draw to the attention of and explain to the local community developments that are planned that will affect them, including explaining the constraints placed upon the Council and officers.
- In both of the above roles, councillors can work most effectively if they are known to the members of the local community, work with local community groups, attend public meetings in their Ward, and are easily contactable. Although we do not have a clear view of the appropriate total number of councillors for a city the size of Sheffield, we do believe that

Ward boundaries should not become so large that councillors cease to be known and recognisable to the local people.

- As a local community group we believe that councillors can perform their roles more effectively when they co-ordinate their actions with those of the voluntary groups within their Ward. This enhances legitimacy by demonstrating that there is a “bottom up” element in formulating an agenda of issues.

#### **4.11. Ecclesfield Parish Council**

- In order to avoid confusion amongst the electorate and from past experience, it is important that there should be a sensible relationship between Ward Boundaries and the Parish Council Boundary. In other words, Ward Boundaries and the Parish Council Boundary should be coterminus.
- If there are to be any changes to Parish Wards then this needs to be handled carefully to maintain a balanced number of electors and that they make sense, on the ground.
- In the Parish Council’s view, the present 3 member City Council Ward system works well and should not be altered.
- Parish Council elections should be held on the same day as City Council elections with the purpose of encouraging voter turn-out and to keep costs to a minimum.

#### **4.12. Mr. Jonathan Harston**

- Mr Harston was a Sheffield City Councillor between 1999 and 2010 and has an interest in mapping, particularly how community groupings relate to their geography.
- The number of councillors in metropolitan councils, however, is broadly proportional to the square root of the population. Sheffield is about four times as big as Barnsley and has about twice as many councillors – the square root of four. Sheffield is about twice as big as Rotherham and has about one and a half times as many councillors – the square root of two. Birmingham is about twice the size of Sheffield and has about one and a half times as many councillors – the square root of two. Consequently, the number of councillors Sheffield currently has fits well into that, and so should remain more-or-less about what it has at the moment – something in the region of 84 councillors. With three-member wards that is around about 28 or so wards.
- A reduction in the number of councillors can only be an option if there is a reduction in the functions and responsibilities of councils. The only change that would make sense is if Sheffield adopted a directly elected executive mayor, taking away the most of the executive functions from councillors.
- The larger a ward, the more residents are distanced from their elected representatives, and the harder it is for elected representative to work their wards.
- Whatever wards Sheffield has must necessarily fit around the immovable geography of the city. Everybody who put together the wards in 2004 worked well to get probably the best set of wards Sheffield has ever had with only a few splits such as Shiregreen and the northern edge of Handsworth. This review shouldn’t undo that good work, but has the opportunity to build on it.
- 27 or 29 wards would be the easiest numbers of wards to divide the city into whilst retaining natural communities.

- Three member wards allow a mix of skills and expertise which is beneficial both for councillors and constituents, but parishes should be able to recommend whether they wish for 2 or 3 member wards.
- Due to the geography, it is not possible for parishes to be used as the building blocks for wards without the addition of some unparished areas.
- The law requires the review to use the registered electorate, which is a fairly consistent proportion of the population [in Sheffield very close to 73%-74% of the population are adults]. You cannot use perceived under-registration to justify a “small” ward on electorate figures because you believe there are people not on the register.

#### **4.13. Mr. Alan Kewley**

- Representing electorate is a key part of the role, but not all councillors provide the level of information and consultation constituents would like to see
- Changing approaches to engaging communities through local level organisations (community assemblies etc) can be confusing and off-putting
- The current changes to local workings may increase workloads for councillors
- Engaging with focus groups could be helpful for councillors
- Councillors may be able to concentrate on broader issues if case work was passed on to officers
- The city leadership role should be balanced with other roles
- Councillor involvement in Scrutiny and other Council meetings and committees can affect the representative role of the councillor
- More cross-party work before decisions are made, rather than after, would improve decision-making
- Councillor workload has increased in recent years while numbers have reduced, making the ratio of electors per councillor in Sheffield one of the highest in the country. Unless managed effectively, this may result in lower standards of governance, which may save initial costs, but result in less scrutiny of flawed decisions which could cost more in the long-run.
- The role of councillor should be made more attractive to enable more young councillors to come forward and increase turnover.
- The number of councillors should be increased -- by at least 10%, creating, say, 3 or 4 new wards & a proportionate reduction in size. But this should be accompanied by a more transparent audit of councillor activity to improve effectiveness. This should be backed-up with a more robust call-in procedure, where councillors who appear to be under-performing are referred to a scrutiny panel.
- Mr Kewley suggests that a job description for councillors may assist both councillors and the people they represent.

#### **4.14. Sheffield Conservatives**

- Believe that the Council is sufficiently big enough.
- Boundaries should be assessed on communities, not drawn up to meet a pattern of three party wards. One or two member wards would be appropriate where there were small discrete communities.

#### **4.15. Sheffield for Democracy**

- Encourage the Council to work towards a consensus view if at all possible to enable the decision to be made locally rather than by the Commission.
- Changes to ward based working, and reduced support for councillors, are likely to increase the workload of councillors, and this is likely to reduce the service that the electorate receive.
- The number of councillors should be at least the same as there are currently.
- Some wards may generate more work, especially casework, than others.
- Maintaining the coherence of communities is more important than having the same number of members per ward.
- Council should include issue of non-registration in their submission and include likely numbers in the forecast (*N.B. per SCC – the legislation requires that electoral reviews are based on the electorate, and not the population or any other figure*)
- Aware that the Council works hard to ensure students are registered appropriately, and need to make sure this is part of the review.

#### **4.16. Sheffield First**

- Recent report by Communities and Local Government Select Committee, looking at the role of Councillors notes the increasing expectation that a Councillor's role is in part about community development and/or leadership, rather than simply representation and also highlights the difficulties being experienced around the country by all organisations, whether political parties or otherwise, in trying to recruit to these roles.
- It is important that elected members are fully involved because they are the community's chosen representatives. In the absence of large-scale investment in community work, it is arguable that councillors should be taking on this role.
- Councillors have sufficient access to be able to hold public sector organisations to account and to challenge them at the local level. This aspect of a councillor's role is likely to become increasingly important, as Sheffield City Council's plans for changes to locality management put them at the centre of a ward-based approach.
- People who feel close to their councillors may be more likely to vote and become engaged in civic life.
- Councillors are expected to fulfil a wide range of roles and responsibilities including ward level and local working, as well as the ability and capacity to lead strategically and to work in partnership.
- There is a link between the review and the issue of active citizenship which is being discussed at Sheffield First. The role of elected members is key to building strong communities. Austerity makes particularly important for councillors to work with citizens – the role of the councillor in times of enormous change is very challenging.

Points of clarification in response to questions from members of the Committee:

- Jillian Creasy: Have you thought about the relationship between the ward councillor and the development of scrutiny and policy?
- SS: The role of members is likely to become more complex generally. Their role should be about making sense of the issues to enable strategic policy decisions, not just within the Council but also with other partners. Sheffield First has been asking partners how they engage with ward councillors.

- Cate McDonald: Can you clarify your understanding of community leadership and community development and what you believe that the role of the councillor should be?
- SS & DS: The two are different and require different skills sets. Councillors are well-placed to be 'network nodes', knowing the community activists within the community. Community development takes significant resources and councillors can't do this alone, but could play a role in developing communities in areas where infrastructure levels are low.
- Ian Auckland: Community Development implies something much more systematic than the approach taken at the moment. The role of the councillor is usually one of leadership – unblocking systems and encouraging communities to act.
- SS: Community leadership is a big ask and very time consuming, but important for community leadership.

#### **4.17. Sheffield District Labour Party**

- People expect their councillors to be accessible, visible – both personally and through letters, emails and by phone – and available to pursue grievances and seek redress. Opinion formers and community group organisers and volunteers expect their councillors to regularly attend their meetings, keep abreast of their development and support and champion their efforts in the wider community and within the Council.
- People think that councillors are MPs. They think they perform the role full time and that they are well remunerated accordingly.
- In performing these roles, councillors make an important contribution to the process of legitimising our democratic model. Assisting with casework and lending support to local projects is important to groups and individuals in ensuring that they feel part of a representative process and that their concerns and achievements are respected and valued.
- There is no evidence that any of these expectations will diminish. If anything, changing models of local governance at ward level would tend towards an anticipation that these expectations will increase.
- Setting the strategic vision and leading one of Britain's biggest cities, with a wide range of projects and an active media is demanding of skills and time.
- Changing funding and service delivery models are not expected to reduce the amount of time that the effective performance of these functions is anticipated to take.
- The increase in responsibilities of local government, and the reduced financial circumstances, mean that the workloads of the administration are increased, whilst outsourcing does not lead to a reduction in demand on councillors.
- Sheffield's diversity, and a commitment to inclusion, increases the demands on councillors.
- Three party wards are the most suitable to ensure that there is a mix of skills.
- The District Labour Party does not believe that there is a case for reducing the number of councillors, and that consideration should be given to increasing.

#### **4.18. Sheffield Liberal Democrat Party and Sheffield Liberal Democrat Councillors' Group**

- Councillors bring a wide range of benefits, skills and experience to the council.
- They have a wide range of roles, including representing constituents, challenging status quo of the Council, making the council accessible to the public.



- Councillors should provide strategic leadership for the Council.
- Councillors have vital role in setting the budget and should ensure that the voices of all communities are heard and that limited funds are spent equitably and efficiently.
- Undermining the role of councillors will undermine the Council's commitment to be an accountable body. No one individual can behold all the skills required of councillors - The tasks that councillors undertake as a 'community campaigner' vary widely. These range from organising and liaising with community groups, speaking to residents on the doorsteps, assisting constituents with casework and identifying and highlighting pressing issues in their ward. In addition, to these community roles, councillors are expected to also contribute at a strategic level to the Council by scrutinising and developing council policy or through their quasi-judicial roles on Council committees such as licensing and planning.
- There is no 'correct' or 'right' model of being a councillor. For the Council to operate at its optimum level, councillors need a complimentary range of skills, styles and experiences, which reflect the nature of our city in the 21<sup>st</sup> century – a geographically, spiritually and physically diverse city.
- Three member wards have on the whole worked well, with councillors complimenting each other's skills, even when they represent different parties. Therefore, we recommend that – whatever the outcomes of the review – Sheffield retain three members wards.
- Reduction of the number of councillors must be considered as a way of reducing the cost of democracy, but other ways should also be considered.
- Sheffield already has the third highest ratio in the country and reductions in the number of members could severely impair the ability of councillors to serve the whole of their community.

#### **4.19. Sheffield Wildlife Trust**

- Based on the national benchmark, the council size is about right.
- The skills and characteristics of individual councillors can be more important than the number of councillors.

#### **4.20. Sheffield 50+**

- Councillors should understand and be representatives of the local area, to act as a point of reference and advocate with the Council.
- Councillors should be visible, especially when changes happen.
- Councillors should listen, understand and when necessary signpost.
- There needs to be more visible publicity about Councillors' Surgeries.
- The review of the role of Community Assemblies may clarify part of the role of Ward Councillors.
- Councillors should encourage local communities and play a leadership role at local and city wide level.
- Councillors should be a representative of the City. In collaboration with colleagues, to promote the city and actively encourage inward investment by an openly warm business welcoming attitude.
- Councillors should advocate to reduce disparities within the city.
- Councillors should see the city as a whole and have a more corporate view.
- Citizens of Sheffield have rejected elected Mayors which implied we want greater local democracy.

- There is a perception that central government is taking away roles and responsibilities and adding contentious parts.
- Education has to be managed locally as it links to enterprise.
- Sheffield should increase the number of councillors to enhance local democracy and reduce the workload on councillors.

## **5. Issues raised by witnesses in evidence that cannot be considered by the review but which relate to issues of local democracy**

- Introducing proportional representation would be fairer and more accurately represent the votes cast in Sheffield for parties other than the two dominant parties in Sheffield.
- Moving to four-yearly elections would be more effective and less antagonistic.
- Efforts to further increase electoral turnout would be beneficial.
- Parliamentary boundary review rode roughshod over communities to ensure a good fit with the numbers.
- Introducing job descriptions for councillors would give them and the public a clearer idea of what to expect.
- Increased training for councillors would help them to meet the wide range of expectations and skills expected of them.

## **6. Conclusion**

6.1. The evidence submitted to the Committee has been valuable to understand the views of interested groups and organisations, and has been fed into the Council's work developing a view on council size. Accompanying this report is the Council's draft submission on Council size.

## **7. Recommendations**

7.1. Scrutiny Management Committee is asked to:

- i.) note and approve the contents of the report;
- ii.) provide views or comments on the draft submission on Council size ;
- iii.) approve the draft submission on Council size and refer it to Full Council prior to its submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

# Sheffield City Council

## Electoral review of Sheffield City Council

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**Submission on council size, to be submitted to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.**

## Part One: Introduction

1. The council has been informed by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (the Commission) that an Electoral Review of Sheffield City Council is to be undertaken between August 2013 and March 2015. This review has been triggered by the finding that the electorate in Central ward is 43% higher than the average electorate in the city.
2. During the first stage of the electoral review, the Commission will reach a decision on the size of the Council (the number of councillors to be returned to the Council). This document is the Council's council size submission to the Commission, and provides the Commission with the Council's view as to the appropriate council size and the evidence supporting this.
3. The Local Government Boundary Commission states in its publication *Electoral reviews: Technical guidance* that the key factors which they will take into consideration in an electoral review are as follows:
  - the governance arrangements of the council, how it takes decisions across the broad range of its responsibilities, and whether there are any planned changes to those arrangements;
  - the council's scrutiny functions relating to its own decision-making and the council's responsibilities to outside bodies, and whether any changes to them are being considered; and
  - the representational role of councillors in the local community and how they engage with people, conduct casework and represent the council on local partner organisations.
4. In addition to these factors, as Sheffield City Council elects by thirds, there is a presumption that the Commission seek to achieve a pattern of three member wards wherever possible.
5. The Council's view, having regard to the above factors and having taken all the available evidence into account, is that it should continue to have 84 councillors. Underlying this view are a number of principles and considerations:
  - Sheffield City Council is a large and ambitious council, seeking to create a **city of global significance**. This requires councillors, particularly Cabinet members, to be strategic and to work at a high level, seeking to influence at a national level. This requires a significant time commitment and a wide range of skills from councillors.
  - At the same time, councillors consider their community role to be very significant and the Council is seeking to enhance the role of councillors in the

community, with **councillors further developing their roles as local leaders**. This enhanced role is recognised by the House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee’s report *Councillors on the Front Line*.

- These two roles, alongside the scrutinising and regulatory duties of the Council, mean that a wide range of skills (and areas of expertise) is needed.
- We believe that particularly in the current challenging times, Sheffield City Council has a role to ensure that we get the best possible outcomes for the city. This means that councillors are stepping up to the challenge in **working with government** to ensure that Sheffield gets its fair share, and at a local level that councillors are experiencing higher levels of casework as they work to **support constituents**, as well as **working with community organisations which are under increasing pressure**.
- The reduction in our financial resources does not mean that the Council should draw back from its role in **ensuring that high quality services continue to be delivered to the people of Sheffield**, and that **democratic oversight is maintained**. This means that even where services are provided by communities or trusts, councillors often play a part in governing bodies.
- We are keen to ensure that the diverse population of Sheffield is represented by a **diverse range of councillors**. We value all of our councillors for their different skills and experiences, and we believe that it is important that demands on councillors do not reach levels that restrict the pool of councillors, or limit the opportunities of particular groups to become councillors.

6. In developing the Council’s submission, the possibility of reducing the number of members was considered, and a range of factors taken into account as below to identify whether there was a prima facie case for changing the number of councillors, either upwards or downwards:

Factor	Reasoning	Change in size?
Role of the councillor in the community	As outlined at section 67, work in the community has always been central to Sheffield councillors, and for back benchers is a larger part of the role than involvement in the Town Hall. Councillors consider themselves as community leaders and activists, and the community leadership role of councillors in Sheffield is increasing, in part as a result of the changes to locality management (at section 32). The increase in this role is anticipated to lead to additional demands on the time of elected members, and to require a wider range of skills.	Possibly – slight increase

The nature of the Council's specific governance arrangements	Sheffield City Council already delegates a significant number of decisions to officers, and has carried out reviews which have reduced the number and frequency of meetings, but the workload on members remains significant, particularly in Licensing committees. There have been reductions in the frequency of some meetings in recent years, but this is not significant and it is felt that there is little scope for further reductions in the number of meetings without adversely impacting on effective decision-making and democratic accountability. New locality management arrangements are likely to lead to an increase in the number of meetings.	No
National and sub-regional working arrangements	Sheffield City Council is ambitious council which seeks to take responsibility more of the services which affect the outcomes for the city. One of the eight Core Cities which has negotiated with government to secure additional powers and responsibilities, Sheffield City Council plays a pivotal role in the Sheffield City Region. Sheffield City Region is in the process of setting up a combined authority alongside other local authorities in the City region. This authority will incur additional responsibilities, and place additional demands on the time of Cabinet members, and also on those councillors who become involved in the scrutiny of the authority, although it is anticipated that the increase will be relatively small.	No
Ratio of councillors	Sheffield City Council has a low number of councillors per head of population compared with the national average, sub-regional average and Core City average. Whilst this is not a factor which is directly relevant, combined with the fact that the city of Sheffield is also relatively deprived, and has a diverse community both placing significant demand on councillors, it provides some indication that there is not a prima facie case for changing the number of councillors.	No
Diversity	Sheffield is a city of great diversity, as outlined in full at Parts Two and Seven. Reducing the number of councillors significantly would not only mean that councillors represented more constituents, but that they would represent a	No

	more diverse range of constituents with a more diverse range of issues. This is challenging both in terms of workload, but also in terms of the fairness and effectiveness of representation for different communities with competing interests.	
Range of responsibilities of the council	Sheffield City Council has recently taken on responsibility for a range of services as detailed at Part Nine. Despite austerity, Sheffield is committed to ensuring that Sheffield continues to receive a full range of service and that democratic oversight is maintained, and to seeking further responsibilities for additional services and outcomes.	
Cost	In the current financial climate, achieving cost savings and value for money is a major concern for the Council. Although reducing the number of elected members would give rise to a small reduction per member/ward, this would not be significant unless the Council reduced in size very significantly as the majority of member support costs and administration of meetings would not be affected. It is not felt that a reduction of a significant magnitude would be manageable. The Council also recognises that most councillors work in a largely voluntary capacity, and that employing staff to carry out the work which they carry out at community level, or to provide more support, would not necessarily represent value for money.	No
Population forecast	Sheffield's population has increased by 7.5% between 2001 and 2011, higher than the national average, and is forecast to continue to grow at around the national average. This growth is not significant enough to warrant an increase in members, but does not give rise to a prima facie case for a decrease.	No
Diverse membership	Sheffield City Council is keen to have a diverse range of councillors with different backgrounds, employment status, age, sex and ability represented. Reducing the size of the Council runs the risk of reducing the diversity of its members, both by virtue of reducing the number of positions and by potentially reducing the involvement of groups who would find an increased workload a barrier. We are particularly aware that those who are self-employed or employed full time find the time	No

	commitment of being a councillor challenging, and do not wish to do anything to worsen this situation.	
Public perception	A small number of responses to the Budget consultation in 2012 suggested reducing councillors to reduce costs. However, witnesses to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee were of the view that the number of councillors should remain the same or be increased.	No

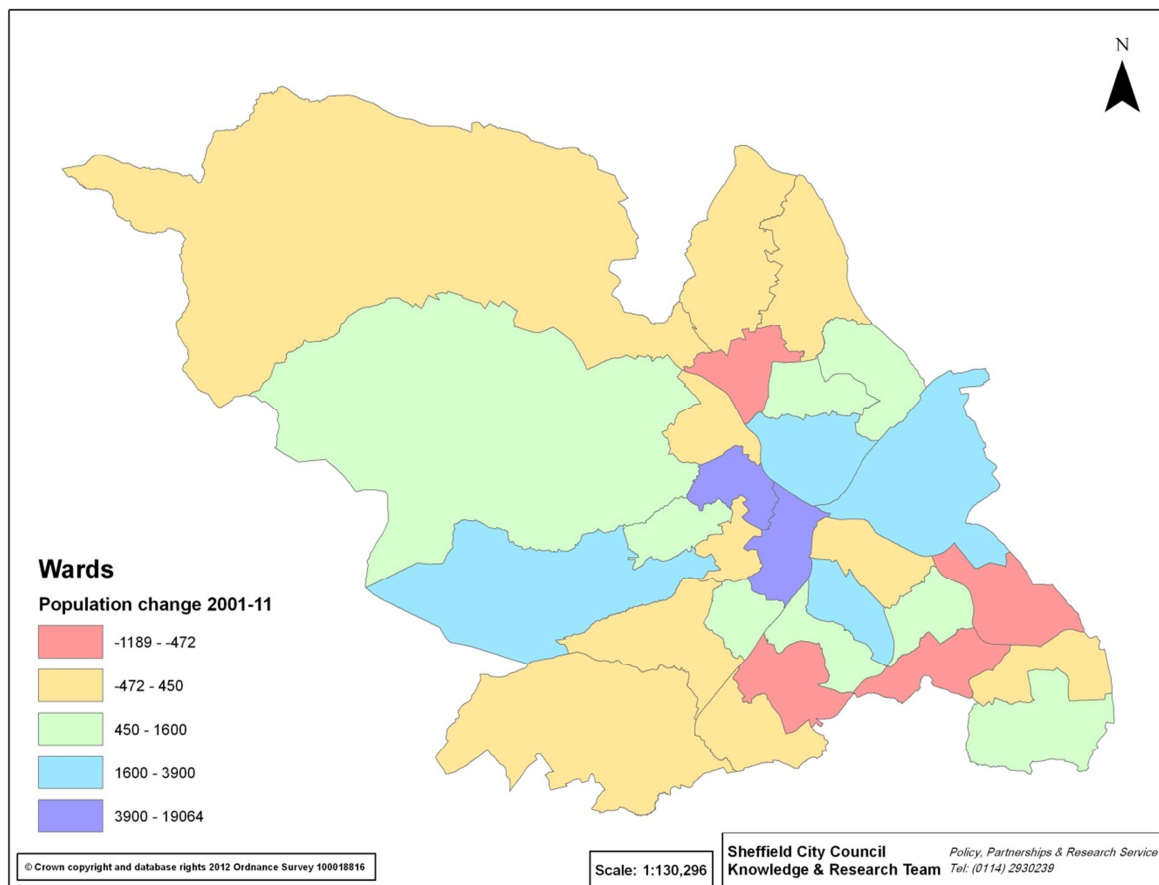
7. The Council's submission on council size has been informed by:
- a. Desk-based research into current ways of working
  - b. A survey of elected members asking for estimates of workload and views of their experiences
  - c. Focus groups considering the representative role of the councillor
  - d. Diaries of councillors workload
  - e. An evidence-gathering session of the Scrutiny Management Committee seeking views from the public
  - f. Consideration of Sheffield's approach to governance and democracy.

## Part Two: Sheffield

### Population and demography

8. With a population of 552,698 at the 2011 Census, Sheffield is England's 3<sup>rd</sup> largest metropolitan authority. The population of Sheffield has increased by 7.5% between the 2001 and 2011 censuses, and is expected to increase by a further 6.3% by 2020, with the 18+ population forecast to grow by 6.4%. This increase has not been uniform across the city, and there is great variation in the stability of population of different wards, as demonstrated on the map below.





9. Sheffield is the 56<sup>th</sup> most deprived local authority in the country, but deprivation is not experienced evenly across the authority, with the South West being more affluent than the national average, and the North East particularly acutely deprived. 16 wards have Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) within the 10% most deprived in the country according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation, with five wards having more than half their residents amongst the 10% most deprived in the country. Health inequalities and education and skills are particularly pronounced: 18 LSOAs are now in the 1% most deprived in terms of education and skills in the country whilst 10 LSOAs are in the 1% least deprived per cent. Whilst significant improvement has been made in health inequalities, the difference in life expectancy between the more affluent and less well-off communities in 2009-11 was 8.7 years for men and 7.4 years for women.
  
10. Aside from the inequalities of deprivation, Sheffield is diverse in many different ways, both in terms of demographics and of geography. This diversity is welcomed, and the wide range of communities make Sheffield the city it is, but the diversity also places demands on the councillors representing them due to the varying needs and interests of different communities.
  
11. Across the city as a whole, around 19% of the population are from black or minority ethnic groups, with the Census indicating distinct communities of 500 or more residents from at least 35 countries, and including both well-established BME communities from countries such as Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia as well as more recent arrivals including a growing Roma-Slovak community, and communities from

the European accession states. Residence of people from BME communities is not uniform across the city: according to the last Census more than 65% of Central ward residents were born outside of the UK, with 20% having lived in the UK for less than five years (this figure will reflect high numbers of overseas students), whilst 43.4% of Burngreave residents were born outside of the UK, with 3.4% having lived in the UK for two years or less, and 14.9% having lived in the UK for ten years or more.

12. Although constituting less than ten per cent of the city's residents, students are a very distinct community in Sheffield. Two large universities mean that Sheffield is home to approximately 40,000 students, with students from the universities making up a significant proportion of the residents in several wards around the city, particularly Broomhill, Crookes and Central wards.
13. The age profile of different wards is particularly interesting, having wide variations, and has challenges for councillors in engaging effectively with a range of different communities.
14. Appendix A provides more detailed population information at ward level, illustrating the diversity of the city.

### **Geography and topography**

15. Sheffield is sited at the heart of the Sheffield City Region. Having a total area of 368km<sup>2</sup>, the geography of the city is also diverse, being centred on the confluence of five rivers, and comprising a number of steep hills and valleys leading to a large number of distinct geographical communities; Sheffield is often described as a city of villages. In terms of geographical area, the city is roughly one third urban, one third rural and one third in the Peak District (although, as would be expected, the large majority of the population reside in the urban area of the city). Wards currently vary in size from 2.743km<sup>2</sup> to 93.127km<sup>2</sup>.

### **Part Three: Sheffield City Council governance**

16. Sheffield City Council is currently composed of 84 councillors, representing 28 three member wards. Councillors are elected by thirds each year, with a 'fallow year' every four years when no elections are held. All seats are contested by the three largest national parties and the Green party, and other smaller national political party candidates and independents also stand in a number of wards. Councillors tend to stand for re-election, with many councillors continuing in position for many years.
17. The last electoral review of the Council took place in 2002/3, being implemented in 2004. This review decided that the council size would reduce from 87 to 84 councillors, a reduction of one ward.
18. In recent times, the political make-up of the Council has varied, with Labour and Liberal Democrat majorities of varying sizes, and periods of no overall control. The

Council currently has a large Labour majority (Labour 60, Lib Dem 22, Green 2). There has been sizeable Conservative opposition in the past, but this has dwindled since the 1980s and the last Conservative councillor lost their seat in 2008.

19. One of the eight Core Cities, in the last eighteen months Sheffield City Council has negotiated an ambitious '**city deal**' with government on behalf of the wider City Region, **taking on new powers and responsibilities** (see para 61), and plans to continue to work with government to increase its responsibility for and influence over outcomes for the people of Sheffield. Sheffield has a central role in the Sheffield City Region, and the city region is currently in the process of setting up a **Combined Authority** with the other local authorities. Consultation closed in October 2013 and the combined authority is anticipated to be up and running by April 2014.
20. Sheffield has a **Local Strategic Partnership**, Sheffield First, which sets the strategic direction for the City. The partnership is led by the Sheffield Executive Board, which is chaired by the Leader of the Council, and includes senior representatives from a range of public, private and voluntary sector organisations in the city.

### Full Council

21. The Council sits in full every month (except August), and is well attended both by councillors and by members of the public. In addition to taking those decisions which are reserved to Full Council, including decisions on the Budget, Sheffield has a **strong and highly valued tradition of questions and answers and petitions from the public, as well as of political debate**, and in 2012/13 there were 147 public questions and 43 public petitions. Full Council usually lasts for approximately 5 hours.

### Executive arrangements

22. Sheffield City Council operates a Strong Leader/Cabinet model, and has done so since May 2010, with the leader and cabinet form of governance having been in place at the time of the last review. The Leader is appointed by the Council annually. The Leader decides the scheme of delegation to executive members and to officers. Although there is an extensive scheme of delegations in place to both portfolio holders and to officers, and the Leader is empowered to take any decision which Cabinet may take, there is a **strong preference for collective Cabinet decision-making on major decisions**, with both of the largest parties taking major decisions at Cabinet.
23. The strong leader model enables swift decisions to be made and provides clear accountability. Whilst, it also has the potential to provide fewer opportunities for a significant number of members to be involved in the detail of decision-making, administrations have used small task and finish groups to **engage a wide range of councillors in policy-making in a flexible way which meets the needs of a modern city**. In addition, both of the larger parties hold biweekly policy sessions which are attended by the majority of councillors.

24. There are currently eight Cabinet portfolios in addition to the Leader:

- Homes and Neighbourhoods
- Finance and Resources
- Business, Skills and Development (including Transport)
- Health, Care and Independent Living
- Culture, Sport and Leisure (including Parks)
- Children, Young People and Families
- Communities and Inclusion
- Environment, Recycling and Streetscene.

25. The size of Cabinet varies from time to time. At the time of the previous electoral review in 2002/03 there were 6 portfolio holders (including the Leader), and in the last decade the number of portfolios has ranged between 8 and 10, with 9 (including the Leader) being the most usual number under both main parties and during periods of no overall control. When the current administration were elected in 2011 they initially had with seven portfolios in addition to the Leader, but this was increased the following year in response to unmanageable work pressures for portfolio holders.

### **Cabinet member demands**

26. The role of the Leader of the Council is considered to be a full time position. Some Cabinet members carry out their role on a full time basis, whilst others work part time or are self-employed. In practice, the number of hours worked by Cabinet members is such that carrying out the role and additional employment is a strain, and often backbench councillors representing the same ward as Cabinet members will support their colleagues in community work.

27. The demands on the time of Cabinet members are significant. Cabinet meets monthly for approximately two hours, and took 98 decisions during the 2012-13 municipal year, with an additional 75 decisions, 23 of which were Leader decisions, taken as Individual Cabinet Member decisions. As well as making formal decisions, Cabinet also takes public petitions and questions and answers. Cabinet sits in the Town Hall for formal decision-making sessions, and also holds seven 'Cabinet in the Community' per year sessions which are public meetings held at locations across the city.

28. Cabinet Highways Committee is a sub-committee of Cabinet and met nine times during 2012/13 with four members at each meeting, for approximately an hour. In 2013/14, Cabinet Highways Committee will meet as and when required to consider highways issues that attract significant public interest, with most Highways decisions being taken at Highways Cabinet Member Decision sessions. At these meetings the

Cabinet Member with responsibility for Highways is present, along with his Cabinet Advisor, to listen to representations from the public and to make decisions. These meetings are scheduled on a monthly basis and are expected to take one hour.

29. In addition to formal Cabinet meetings, Cabinet members sit on a wide range of internal, citywide, regional and sub-regional committees and bodies<sup>1</sup>, as well as attending a wide range of ad hoc and scheduled meetings with officers, community organisations and businesses and partners.

### Involvement of backbench councillors in policy

30. Involvement in official council business and policy making varies widely across the body of councillors. All councillors sit on at least one committee (scrutiny or regulatory). As mentioned at paragraph 23, task and finish groups are commonly utilised for policy development, and at the current time there are six task and finish groups running. Task and finish groups contribute to policy development and carry out work at a more detailed level than can be achieved at Cabinet or Full Council meetings. They tend to be time limited in nature, and may meet frequently over a short period of time, or less frequently, depending on the nature of the work required. Task and finish groups tend to involve around six members, usually drawn from the majority political group.
31. There are currently 10 Cabinet advisor positions. Cabinet advisors provide a support role to portfolio holders and will attend some meetings alongside their portfolio holder, as well as taking on their own responsibilities within the portfolio. The role enables **effective succession planning**; this is considered to be of vital importance in a city the size of Sheffield where Cabinet members will be required to work at a high level making frequent decisions of significant importance.

### Local area partnerships

32. Until early 2013, Sheffield City Council had a system of seven Community Assemblies (four wards per Assembly). All councillors were members of a Community Assembly, and assemblies had delegated powers in relation to some services, and substantial discretionary grants budgets. Community assemblies met quarterly, and were supported by a team of officers who dealt with community issues (although not individual casework), provided a source of information for councillors and administered and organised meetings, as well as providing additional points of contact for members of the public. As a result of the budget savings required to be made to the Council's budget, the Council has recently taken the decision to abolish community assemblies, replacing them with a new system of ward-based member working and Local Area Partnerships (LAPs). The officer resource has been reduced significantly, and **elected members will play a greater role, with increased focus around community leadership**, and councillors will also receive less administrative support, although the LAP chairs will receive a Special Responsibility Allowance.

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<sup>1</sup> A full list of internal and external appointments for the Council is appended at Appendix C.

33. There are now seven LAPs, again consisting of four wards each (and retaining the existing boundaries: they will be reviewed following the electoral review), but with one ward member from each ward sitting on the partnership (rather than all twelve councillors). Instead of traditional public meetings (which were held quarterly), each area will have a series of public workshops over the year, with an increased focus on social media, and potentially on youth working.

### Ward based working

34. At the same time, the focus of work has moved from the seven large areas to ward-based work. Each ward will have a lead ward member, and ward members will be required to work together annually to develop a ward plan, and to distribute ward funds, the size of which will be determined by the ward's place on the Index of Multiple Deprivation. Councillors will have an increased role in the distribution and administration of ward funds.
35. Each ward will be supported to hold up to four ward based events each year, with an expectation that councillors will be largely responsible for delivering the events. Ward events may include public meetings, walkabouts or scrutiny of services at local level. In some wards where regular ward based meetings have been held, this may mean that councillors receive much less support for ward level work than they have in the past.
36. At the time of writing, the LAP and ward based working model has only just been introduced and it is still uncertain exactly what level of impact there will be on councillors, although councillors will be required to take a more hands on role with significantly less support, and it is anticipated that this will lead to an increase in workload, particularly for LAP members and lead ward members.
37. The Cabinet report on Locality working can be found at Appendix B.

### Parishes

38. Sheffield has two parish councils (Bradfield and Ecclesfield) and one town council (Stocksbridge). These are all located in the rural north of the city. Although almost 50% of the city by area is parished, the majority of the population live in areas of the city which are unparished, with approximately 11% of the population living in a parished area. At present, five city councillors are also parish and town councillors. Further information about parish councils can be reached from the Council's website<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/your-city-council/elections/types-of-elections.html#parishelections>

## Part Four: Regulatory process

### Planning

39. The Planning Committee carries out the Council's regulatory functions under the relevant planning legislation. Recently reduced from two geographic committees to one, the Committee consists of 13 members and meets every three weeks. This reduced membership and number of meetings reflects a relatively low level of major applications in comparison to previous years.
40. The delegation scheme reflects national best practice models in that all application decisions are delegated, unless they are identified as falling within the following terms of reference:
- (a) the proposal is a major opportunity for development that represents a significant regeneration opportunity for the City;
  - (b) the decision would represent a significant departure from policy;
  - (c) the Council's policy position is unclear or difficult to determine;
  - (d) the decision would be in conflict with a substantial number of representations made on planning grounds and where the outcome is not clearly predetermined by approved planning policy;
  - (e) formal enforcement or legal proceedings in respect of unauthorised development are likely to take place.
41. In consequence, 94% of the 2453 decisions taken during 2012/13 were delegated to officers and a total of 154 decisions were taken by Planning Committees during 2012/13. This is a low level in comparison to previous years, and it is anticipated that, based on the level of applications in 2006/07 and the necessity of increasing house building significantly, committee workload could increase by approximately 50% with a full economic recovery. There is some evidence from the high number of pre-application enquiries being handled (where the applicants' willingness to pay for this service is a good indication of the seriousness of the enquiry) to indicate that this anticipated increase in major schemes is coming shortly.
42. There are many changes taking place in the planning system nationally, but these are not expected to make any difference to the number of major applications that Sheffield will receive, as many of the changes relate to minor applications that are not reported to Committee and Sheffield City Council has had very few applications that might be caught by new national infrastructure processes.
43. Members are also required to attend training on planning issues and to keep informed about current regulatory practice.



44. Planning decisions in the Peak District National Park area of the city are taken by the National Park Authority (which includes one Sheffield City councillor), although these constitute a tiny proportion of the planning applications in the city.
45. The Committee membership has been reviewed recently and it is felt that 13 is the optimum number of councillors for the committee at the present time.

## Licensing

46. The Licensing Act 2003 paragraph 6(1) specifies a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 15 members for the Licensing Committee, with no legally defined quorum. Sheffield City Council's Licensing Committee consists of 15 members appointed annually will meet on a monthly basis in 2013/14, either as a formal meeting or to undertake training. Meetings last approximately on average for three hours. The Licensing Committee makes decisions on licensing policy, and reviews all policies on a three year programme. Attendance at the Licensing Committee was 58% in the 2012/13 municipal year.
47. In Sheffield, decisions on applications are delegated to officers, with the Licensing subcommittee hearing those applications which are contested or otherwise outside the scope of the officer delegations, with 128 hearings taking place during 2012/13 over 81 meetings. The Licensing Subcommittee meets two or three times per week for around three hours, there have been occasions where individual meetings have lasted over two days to listen to evidence and take a decision. Three members are required per meeting and are rota'd to attend (with a reserve being required to attend, and being released once it is clear that the meeting is quorate). The committee is always quorate. The Licensing Sub-Committee considers all licensing cases concerning the following licence types where there is an objection, or where it is proposed that a license is revoked or refused, and takes decisions on licenses as covered by the legislation listed below:
  - Licensing Act 2003
  - Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 (As Amended)
  - Gambling Act 2005
  - Street Trading (Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 – Schedule 4
  - Sex Establishments (Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 – Schedule 3
  - Street Collections - Police, Factories, Etc. (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1916
  - House to House Collections Act 1939
  - Pet Shops (Pet Animals Act 1951)



- Animal Boarding Establishments Act 1963
- Riding Establishments Act 1964
- Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976
- Zoo Licensing Act 2002
- Dog Breeders (Breeders of Dogs Act 1973 / Breeding of Dogs Act 1991)
- Motor Salvage Operations (Vehicles(Crime) Act 2001)
- Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013
- Civil Marriages & Civil Ceremonies Marriage Act 1949 & Religious Premises Approved Premises Registration
- Private Hire Drivers, Vehicles & Operators - Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976
- Hackney Carriages Vehicles (Town Police Clauses Act 1847)
- Poisons Act 1972
- South Yorkshire Act 1980
- Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 as inserted in the Highways Act 1982
- Hypnotism Act 1952
- Commons Act 2006
- Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982, Part VIII

48. Although government policy is to minimise 'red tape', including a reduction in the need for licenses in some areas, Sheffield City Council has not experienced a reduction in workload for the licensing committee. In recent years the workload of the committee has been relatively static with some minor fluctuations, and the anticipated number of meetings for 2013/14 is 108, twenty more than in 2012/13 and a return to 2010/11 levels.

49. The majority of applications considered at Sub-Committee in Sheffield concern taxi licenses and a recent review by the Law Commission has not recommended changes which are likely to give rise to a significant reduction in hearings. Other cases which are fewer in volume, but more time-consuming as individual cases, are also not anticipated to reduce significantly. In some cases, new policy and legislation will increase rather than reduce workload, for example the Scrap Metal Act 2003 which gives Licensing Authorities more regulatory powers in relation to scrap metal dealers and merchants, including the power to refuse a license and powers to revoke licenses if the dealer is considered unsuitable, and will mean contested applications being considered at Subcommittee.

50. In addition, the Licensing Sub-Committee has recently taken on the responsibility for registration of land as a town / village green etc. There are currently six registration

applications pending which will all need a hearing or non- statutory inquiry, as well as a meeting to decide the correct process and, in the event of a non-statutory inquiry, a further meeting is required to determine the inspector's report, with a similar number anticipated to come forward, and changes to the Commons Act 2008 are anticipated to increase the number of applications for registrations of land. The Committee has not yet heard a case, but it is anticipated that individual cases will require additional meetings and may take as long as two / three full days. Review hearings under the Licensing Act 2003, which take place occasionally, also require several days of hearings at short notice.

51. Given the current and anticipated workload of the Committee, it is not considered that any reduction in the size of the Licensing Committee would be appropriate or manageable.

### **Other statutory and regulatory committees**

52. Other internal committees include the Audit Committee (six members and two external co-optees), the Admissions Committee (7 members), the Senior Officer Employment Committee (14 members) and Appeals and Collective Disputes Committee (15 members). A decision was taken by the Council to maintain a Standards Committee (eight members and four co-opted members per meeting).

### **Part Five: Scrutiny process**

53. There are four standing Scrutiny and Policy Development Committees:
  - Children, Young People and Family Support (13 councillors)
  - Economic and Environmental Wellbeing (13 councillors)
  - Healthier Communities and Adult Social Care (13 councillors)
  - Safer and Stronger Communities (13 councillors)
54. In addition, there is also a Scrutiny Management Committee (comprised of the chairs and vice chairs of the four committees). The chairs of committees are currently drawn from the administration, with vice chairs drawn from the main opposition group.
55. The Committees are scheduled to meet every other month, with extra work in between through informal working groups. It is more usual for the Health O&S Committee to meet monthly to enable it to carry out health scrutiny functions. Additional call-in meetings are held when required – there were five during 2012/13.

56. Workloads tend to be manageable for the core bi-monthly meetings, although elected members find it more challenging to take part in further working group work and site meetings, and it can be challenging to find members to attend due call-ins at short notice.
57. Workloads vary from committee to committee, with some committees having several task and finish groups over the year, and some not having any at all. Workload also varies between members within committees depending on how many task and finish groups they sign up to. The Healthier Communities and Adult Social Care Committee has a particularly heavy workload both in terms of more frequent regular meetings and task and finish groups.
58. Committee members are expected to prepare for meetings – largely by reading meeting papers. Members are expected to attend and contribute to working groups and task and finish groups where they have signed up to them. During 2012/13 4 working groups were established – each resulting in around 6 extra meetings for the Councillors involved. Numbers involved in working groups range from 5 Councillors, to the whole Committee. Occasionally site visits are scheduled. Chairs and Deputies are expected to meet with relevant officers and partners for horizon scanning to ensure that work programmes stay relevant and targeted on the most pressing issues.
59. Elected members are considering changes to the role and functions of the scrutiny committees to enable members to have greater involvement in policy development and in developing recommendations for improvement, as well as continuing to scrutinise. If implemented, these changes are expected to lead to a higher workload. It is also anticipated that the Council will take on a greater role for scrutiny at a local level, as well as having greater involvement in scrutinising partners, and there will be a requirement for the council to be involved in the scrutiny of the Combined Authority.

## **Part Six: Other Council appointments and external appointments**

### **Internal appointments**

60. There are a total of 20 other internal committees, working groups advisory groups and forums to which backbenchers are appointed. These have a total of 91 positions (14 of which are currently vacant). All councillors are also members of their political group's policy working group which meet fortnightly. There are also three Champion positions covering older people, younger people and sexual health. The full list of memberships is available at Appendix C.

## Sheffield City region Combined Authority

61. Following work with Central Government to establish a City Deal (see Appendix D), Sheffield City Region is in the process of setting up a Combined Authority which will have powers to:
- Set City Region Economic Strategies
  - Set the investment strategy for the Sheffield City Region Investment Fund
  - Make decisions with regard to the Sheffield City Region Investment Fund
  - Make decision in relation to the uplift from Enterprise Zone business rates
  - Set the SCR for Growth Strategy
  - Coordinate inward investment activity.
62. The Combined Authority will also have the powers set out for Combined Authorities in the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (LDEDCA), similar to the 'wellbeing' powers that local authorities used to have. The Sheffield City Region has also asked for the General Power of Competence – for economic wellbeing outcomes. All the ITA's transport powers will transfer to the SCR Authority and the ITA will be dissolved in accordance with Local Transport Act 2008. The powers of the Authority will be concurrent and therefore shared, not ceded by the member authorities.
63. The authority is currently sitting in shadow form, and meets monthly, and once implemented will also include a Local Transport Board, potentially other committees including scrutiny arrangements which are likely to involve Sheffield City councillors. The Leader is Sheffield City Council's representative on the shadow Combined Authority. Once the authority is fully established other Members (usually Cabinet Members) will sit on the sub-boards.

## Other external appointments

64. The Council formally appoints members to four main South Yorkshire Joint bodies (the Fire and Rescue Authority; Integrated Transport Authority (this will be abolished when the Combined Authority comes into being) and the Pensions Authority as well as the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel), with 19 positions between them.
65. Appointments are also made to a total of 65 other external bodies, including smaller South Yorkshire joint arrangements such as Archives and Archaeology, a Sheffield and Rotherham Joint Emergency Planning Committee which oversees a shared service. This constitutes a total of 109 positions, and two observer roles. Of these, 23 are filled by the relevant Cabinet member.

66. The resulting workload of external appointments vary significantly: for example the Fire and Rescue Authority meets monthly as a full authority, with six committees of the Authority meeting between two and four times per year, whilst the Sheffield Compact Board meets quarterly. A full list of memberships can be found at Appendix C.

## Part Seven: The Councillor's representational role

67. Although the third of the Commission's criteria, the councillor's representational and community roles are considered by councillors and the public in Sheffield to be very important, and most councillors will spend the majority of their time as councillors engaging with constituents and their communities, either in person or when dealing with issues and cases on their behalf 'behind the scenes', so it is important to recognise that small reductions in official Council meetings have only a minor impact on the workload of councillors.
68. The importance of the role of the councillor in the community is recognised by the House of Commons Local Government Committee in their report [Councillors on the Front Line](#) where they note that nationally "the role of councillor is becoming increasingly demanding, with casework and e-mail creating particular pressures. Changes to the role of councillor are likely to create further demands on councillors' time."

### Community leadership

69. Whilst different elected members work in different ways, councillors tend to describe their role as an active one of community leadership, and this is a role which is anticipated to increase in the short term and on an on-going basis as part of the new approach to locality working (see paras 32-37). Councillors are especially active on issues of significant community interest or concern, with councillors setting up public meetings to discuss issues, and then on-going campaigning work. In some circumstances, councillors will also take on 'community development' work in communities, for example helping to initiate community groups, leaving the ongoing control of the group over to the community once the group is more developed. This type of community development role is very labour intensive, and requires particular skills which some councillors will be more able to practice than others.
70. The new locality working model (introduced at para 32) seeks to redefine the councillor's role in the community as below:
- Targeting support to communities where engagement and involvement is most needed and where capacity for self-support may be limited;

- Developing the community leadership role of councillors in working with communities to support their interests;
- Making the ward and neighbourhood the focus of most activity rather than the much larger Community Assembly areas/meetings which few residents identify with while acknowledging that some partnership working is required at a wider area level.

### Engaging with individual constituents

71. In addition to the active community leadership role, most members hold **surgeries**, often with the three members in a ward working on a rota basis. These vary in frequency and popularity: surgeries in some wards are held three times a month for several hours, and councillors in some more deprived wards report growing numbers of residents attending; in other wards surgeries are held once a month and frequently have no-one attend. Even where attendance is low, most councillors consider regular surgeries to be important as they are publicised locally and on the Council website so that constituents can know where they can access their local councillor at a particular time without having to contact them in advance. In addition to static surgeries, many councillors also carry out street surgeries, where they publicise a time that they will be in a particular street and available to speak to residents. Most councillors also **meet with constituents at the individual constituent's convenience**, visiting constituents' homes, receiving constituents at their own homes or meeting elsewhere.
72. Councillors tend to share some of the workload, particularly where there are single party wards but also to a lesser degree in mixed wards, for example attending surgeries on a rota basis and having rotas for attendance at community meetings and events. In some areas where wards meet in a community with shared interests, councillors from several wards will share a surgery (e.g. Manor Top).

### Partnership working, social cohesion and anti-social behaviour

73. In some communities **councillors have a very active role with the community, especially in relation to social cohesion issues**, with councillors sometimes being called in by police to help to work with communities in urgent situations, as well as working proactively to help to solve community problems. This can be particularly the case for councillors from BME backgrounds living in communities with high levels of BME residents where a councillor of a particular ethnic origin will usually will be seen as the first port of call for issues relating to that community. Anti-social behaviour work can also lead to councillors working closely with victims and the police, with focus groups providing evidence of some councillors providing support for victims who might otherwise be afraid to provide evidence as witnesses.

## Diversity

74. As outlined in paragraphs 8-14, as a large city, Sheffield is far more diverse than most local authorities will be, and this diversity, in terms of geography and demography, is such that **councillors across the city will have very different workloads and demands on their time.**
75. **In more deprived wards, benefits and housing issues ensure a sizable caseload (and caseloads which are increasing as a result of austerity).** Work which took place in 2009 suggested that caseloads varied from about 50 live cases at any one time in one of the most deprived wards, to five in one of the least. Our survey of councillor workloads suggests that time spent on community obligations (TARAs, community forums, attendance at fundraising events and meetings called to address community issues etc) and engaging with constituents (e.g. through static surgeries and street surgeries) is particularly high in the most deprived areas. At the same time, some councillors who represent wards which are primarily affluent, also have areas within their ward which are much more deprived, so **representing constituents who have very different problems, and potentially conflicting interests.** Examples of wards which have this type of diversity include West Ecclesfield, Beauchief and Greenhill, Walkley, and Mosborough, all of which include LSOAs in the 10% most deprived and 20% least deprived in the Indices of Multiple Distribution.
76. Councillors in a number of wards will represent constituents from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, ranging from third generation immigrant communities to new arrivals. In some cases, **councillors represent hundreds or thousands of constituents who do not speak English as their main language.** Two wards have more than 5% of residents who do not speak English at all or do not speak English well, and whilst we do not have data on the full range of languages spoken, the Census tells us that several wards have over 60 languages spoken as a main language. As councillors do not have access to translation facilities, language barriers can provide significant challenge both for engaging with individual constituents, as well as for engaging with communities more broadly. Outside of language barriers, the **challenges in representing multiple communities of interest within a single ward are significant,** and councillors will often be drawn upon to **mediate between different communities** as well as to represent the interests of communities which may have very different expectations, needs and wishes.
77. **Councillors in rural and more affluent wards often experience other demands:** for example, the two largest rural wards (Stocksbridge and Upper Don, and Stannington) are also the most distant from the city centre, approximately 40 minutes by car to the city centre from the furthest reaches of the ward, and taking approximately 30 minutes to drive from one end of the ward to the other. They also include two parish and town councils and the city has five twin-hatted councillors within the rural parishes. Councillors in two more rural and affluent wards are also currently involved with the development of neighbourhood plans which places additional demands on their time. Councillors in more affluent areas may not experience the level of

demand for help with benefits, housing and social cohesion issues, but experience high levels of demand from interested members of the public who may be more engaged with the democratic process and have their own concerns regarding their communities, including community relationships with students as there are significant levels of student accommodation in much of the affluent South West of the city.

78. In addition to the demands which are created by the wide diversity of Sheffield, we believe that it is **beneficial for a population which is diverse to be represented by a diverse range of councillors**. We are aware that women and black and minority ethnic communities are under-represented in the councillor body, and that in the councillor questionnaire, women were significantly more likely to say that they did not have sufficient time to carry out their council and political role effectively (61.5% of women compared with 20% of men; the only councillor of BME origin to respond also said that they did not have time to fulfil their role effectively, but this sample is too small to be valid). This is of particular concern as our Single Equality Scheme 2010-13 includes as an objective to increase the number of women involved in civic participation, decision-making and engagement.

### The impact of technology on the community role

79. Most councillors produce newsletters and a growing number of councillors blog and use social media such as Twitter. For younger councillors in particular, social media plays an important and growing part in their communication and engagement with the public, although councillors note that their constituents' use of technology varies, and that face to face contact remains important. One of the intentions of the new ways of working for councillors is also that councillors should make greater use of social media.
80. As might be expected, councillors largely report an increasing amount of their interaction being carried out by way of email, and for some councillors, social media. **All councillors report the impact of email as significant**, noting that email means that constituents are more likely to contact them than they would do if communicating by letter and that on-going exchange may be more prolonged, as well as emails arriving throughout the day and night.
81. Despite the large increase in electronic communication, most councillors find that in the majority of cases **members of the public still value interaction by phone or in person**, and that it is often better to have conversations than to rely on electronic means. IT literacy is still relatively low amongst older residents, and there are some rural areas where internet accessibility remains unreliable, although this should progressively improve over time.



## Part Eight: Support for elected members

82. Councillors receive a moderate level of support to carry out their functions, although this has **reduced in recent years with the need to find budget savings**.
83. Cabinet members and some chairs of committees are supported by PAs and secretaries, a total of 11 FTE) who manage diaries and provide other support. The remainder of the councillors are responsible for their own diaries and the vast majority of their administration. This support has reduced in recent years (a reduction of almost 50% since 2009), so elected **members are now expected to carry out more of their own administrative duties than was the case** in previous years.
84. At a local level, 2013/14 has seen a very significant reduction in support for councillors with the Locality Team reducing from seven Community Assembly Managers to two, and a similar level of reduction in project officers.
85. Briefings are provided periodically on new legislation and matters of policy, including a Policy Brief which goes out to councillors approximately four times a year, with special editions covering key legislation and policy. Councillors can also request briefings on other issues as required.
86. The two largest political groups are supported by one full time political assistant each who are employed by the Council. The administration is also supported by a Group Support Officer (although this position is currently vacant). The Group Support Officer position for the main opposition group was removed in the last round of budget cuts.
87. Councillors receive ICT support in the form of laptops and Blackberries, as well as having a named officer to deal with issues related to ICT and access to training as required. Despite recent attempts to improve ICT support councillors do not currently find that ICT support meets their requirements, although it is hoped that plans to improve support will improve upon this.

### Training

88. Councillors receive formal induction when they are first elected. In addition to this there is formal mandatory training provided for members on the Planning Committees, with refresher training provided, and as of 2013/14 training sessions will be scheduled into the workplan for the Licensing Committee. Until recently, councillors have received annual Individual Performance Reviews including a skills audit, and learning plans; this is moving to a self-assessment model with officer input

focussing on the training and development required to implement the new locality working approach, as well as ICT which has been identified as an area where a high proportion of members would benefit from additional training and support. There is no dedicated Member Development Officer position.

89. Within the Labour group, there is a member development working group which is considering providing more systematic training and development for Labour members, but at present informal arrangements are created as necessary for new members and those taking on new roles.

### Reductions in support

90. As the Council has experienced significant budget reductions in recent years, councillors have been asked to find the same level of savings from their support budget as the remainder of the council services. This has largely been achieved, and has resulted in a reduction of support for councillors, including reduced secretarial support as at para 83. This has been felt particularly by back bench and opposition members. Alongside the move away from the Community Assembly support teams, **this reduction in support will increase the demands on councillors on an on-going basis.**

### Member allowances

91. All councillors receive a basic allowance of £11,742.45, with childcare and dependent carers and travel expenses payable in addition. This basic allowance is paid in recognition of the time commitment of all Councillors and also to cover incidental costs which Members may incur whilst carrying out their Council duties, with the exception of travel costs, out of City subsistence and childcare and dependent carers' costs, for which separate claims can be made. **The basic allowance has not increased since 2010/11.**
92. Special Responsibility Allowances are currently payable for a total of 40 roles<sup>3</sup>. In recent years there have been **reductions in the levels of the allowances, as well as the numbers of posts attracting an SRA**, for example the number of Cabinet advisors has reduced from 14 in 2010/11 to 10 in 2013/14 and the number of opposition group allowances paid was also reduced in 2013/14.

## Part Nine: The changing role of the Council and of councillors

93. The Council has experienced significant change since the last review was carried out in 2002/3, across a range of areas discussed below.

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<sup>3</sup> Information about councillors allowances and a full list of SRAs can be found in the Council's constitution on the website: <http://meetings.sheffield.gov.uk/council-meetings/constitution#download>

## Localism

94. For Sheffield, the main impact of the localism agenda has been in terms of the devolution of responsibilities from national to city level. Sheffield City Council is an ambitious Council, and has taken advantage of the Sustainable Communities Act and the Localism Act 2011 to negotiate with Government for greater powers and responsibilities as outlined at para 61. Other responsibilities have been transferred to the Council by Government as part of national policy (public health functions and a £29.7m budget, Council Tax support and the Local Assistance Scheme), and the Council is now responsible for a broader range of services than in 2003.
95. It is anticipated that there will be further responsibilities devolved to the city, potentially as part of national policy, and also following further negotiations between the Council and government under the City Deal model or the Localism Act. These new responsibilities will have some implications for elected members, with medium term impact for elected members who are part of a task and finish group (typically six members) and who might attend monthly meetings over a period of 18 or 24 months during the planning and implementation phase of a transfer, as well as for the Cabinet member and potentially Scrutiny Committees in the long term. Depending on the powers transferred to the Council, there may also be increases in casework for backbench councillors.
96. The localism agenda in terms of devolution from city to local level has been less significant for Sheffield City Council. There has been very limited interest from communities in any of the rights provided by the Localism Act 2011, with (at the time of writing in September 2013) three applications for a building to be listed as an asset of community value, no applications for the community right to bid and two neighbourhoods in the early stages of developing neighbourhood plans being developed. Limited general interest in the rights mean that it is not anticipated that this will increase significantly.
97. Although affecting only a small number of councillors, in those areas where **neighbourhood plans** are being developed there is likely to be an impact on local councillors who may become involved in the development of the plans. The process of developing a neighbourhood plan is lengthy and time-consuming and the role of the councillor in it may be a challenging one with councillors having a role both locally and strategically.
98. In recent years the Council has devolved control of a number of assets, in particular sports and leisure facilities and services, to communities. It is likely that this will

increase to some degree at least, with a consultation currently taking place which would see the transfer of five libraries to community leadership. However, Sheffield City Council believes that there is an important role for the Council and its members in ensuring that **democratic accountability** is maintained, and services or assets which might be devolved may still require the Council to maintain residual involvement and it is not anticipated that it will necessarily reduce elected member involvement: although it is proposed that a small number of local libraries are to be run by local communities, the Council will continue to be responsible for ensuring that the city has a library service, and councillors may well be involved in the community organisations in some capacity. At present there are 23 councillor roles on boards of trustees of organisations to which assets have been transferred or which deliver services on an arm's length basis and it is likely that this will increase.

### Outsourcing

99. Many of the Council's public-facing services have been outsourced since the last review, including waste management, highways and street-scene, museums, galleries and sports venues, property management and housing repairs, revenues and benefits and many adult social care services and children's services. Management of the majority of the council's housing stock was transferred to an ALMO in 2004, and in 2013 returned in house (a small percentage of the stock was transferred by stock transfer following a tenant ballot and remains outside of Council control). **Councillors have not found that the outsourcing of services, or their return, has a significant impact on their caseloads or work**, as the Council retains accountability for services, as well as responsibility for policy and funding, and the public tends to continue to perceive services as 'council services' and therefore complaints or issues with these services are still directed towards councillors.

### Council funding

100. Changes to council funding, in particular the increase in importance of business rates for the Council's funding base, mean that the Council is subject to significantly more volatility than in the past. With the introduction of the new funding arrangements from April 2013 a significant proportion of the Council's income will come from the 49% of retained business rate income. The financial position of the Council will now be substantially dependent on its ability to raise and collect the expected level of business rates.

### Austerity

101. Sheffield has experienced severe budget reductions in recent years, as well as experiencing increasing pressures on services with £180m reductions so far, and

**ongoing reductions** anticipated to continue for at least five more years. As a result, budget decisions now take significantly more member time than was the case in the past, with lengthy decision-making processes required for Cabinet members to make the increasingly difficult reductions, and councillors at a local level spending significant time in meetings with local organisations and communities affected by both council and central government reductions.

102. Whilst it is envisaged that some services may cease to be delivered by the Council, the **Council is committed to maintain its ambition for the City to be one of global significance and is committed to maintaining as full a range of services as possible for the people of Sheffield**, although recognising that services will look very different in the future. It is not anticipated that any service reductions will be at a scale that would significantly reduce the workload of elected members.

103. At the same time, the level of deprivation experienced in Sheffield has increased: the 2010 Indices of Multiple Deprivation showed that Sheffield has become relatively slightly more deprived since 2007 and it is probable that this will have increased since 2010: recent research suggests that the welfare reforms will take £173m out of Sheffield each year, with an average loss to each working adult of £471 (although in practice this loss will not be evenly distributed and will be borne more heavily by the poorest)<sup>4</sup>. **Councillors representing more deprived wards report increased caseloads** already, and as cuts to the welfare budgets deepen and support agencies become more over-stretched, it is anticipated that this will increase. The increased role of the Council in delivering and managing social housing as well as in distributing the local assistance fund may well also increase caseloads and surgery attendances for elected members – there have been recent instances of surgeries taking more than twice the usual amount of time, as well as significant increases in other casework related to benefit changes. It is also the premise of new ward based working arrangements that **councillors will have a role in ensuring that communities are able to become stronger and more resilient**, and this is arguably more challenging in the face of austerity.

104. It is anticipated that **austerity will increase the workload of members rather than reduce it**.

## Part Ten: Evidence from the people of Sheffield

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4. [“Hitting the poorest places hardest: the local and regional impact of welfare reform”](#) Christina Beatty and Steve Fothergill, Sheffield Hallam University Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research.

105. As part of the development of this submission, the Council held a session of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee. Invitations to engage were sent to over seventy groups and individuals, including all those who had responded to the recent consultation on Community Assemblies. Written submissions and oral evidence was received from eleven individuals and organisations. This included submissions by Sheffield First (the Local Strategic Partnership), the local Labour, Liberal Democrat and Conservative parties, local democracy campaigning group Sheffield for Democracy, several local community groups and charities and individuals.
106. There was no clear desire from respondents for a reduction in the number of councillors, with **respondents generally feeling that the current number was 'about right' and several respondents stating a preference for an increase in the number of councillors**. Whilst some respondents noted that the cost of democracy needs to be managed, reducing the number of councillors was not seen as the only or most desirable way to do this.
107. Several respondents mentioned both that Sheffield has a relatively low number of councillors per head of population, and also that the change to ward based working arrangements would be likely to increase workloads for councillors.
108. The role of the councillor in the community was the best understood of the councillor's roles, and something which respondents felt was particularly important. The increasing importance of the councillor's representative role, and accompanying increase in workload was a theme repeated throughout the evidence.
109. Several respondents indicated that retaining three member wards was important, whilst one respondent suggested changing this number if appropriate. In practice, as the council elects by thirds, the Commission is required by law to look to achieve a pattern of three member wards unless there are pressing reasons why this would not work.
110. The report of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee can be found at Appendix E.

## Part eleven: Conclusion

111. In addition to the above analysis, further analysis was carried out to build up the number of person hours needed to service the needs of the council and the city,

working from the presumption that governance arrangements remain at the current levels (which we believe to be the most appropriate) and **without taking into account the unquantified but likely increases in workload at a community level.**

112. The analysis presumes that Cabinet members are effectively full time, and so their involvement in Full Council and other committees is not included in the analysis. The required person hours per week for each position is calculated by multiplying the frequency of the meeting by the length of the meeting and then by the number of attendees required at that meeting, to arrive at the number of person hours required per year, and then divided by 52 to arrive at the number of hours per week.

Position/type of work/committee	Number of meetings (per annum)	Length of meeting (approximate, hours)	Number of members required	Person hours per week (calculated)
Leader				Full time
Cabinet x 8				Effectively full time
Full Council (back benchers only)	11	5	75	87.2
Audit Committee	6	2	6	1.4
Admissions Committee	12	1.5	7	2.4
Appeals and collective disputes committee	6	2	3 (from a panel of 16)	0.7
Local Area Partnerships	3 per LAP	2	28	3.2
Ward meetings	4	2 hours	3 councillors per ward	11.5
Licensing Committee	10	3	15	8.6
Licensing sub-committee	79 (minimum)	3	3	13.7
Scrutiny Committees	35	2.5	13	21.9
Scrutiny management committee	4	2	8	1.2
Scrutiny working committee meetings	4 working groups meeting 6 times = 24	2	Average 8	7.4

Planning Committee	17	3	13	12.75
Standards Committee	2	2	8	0.6
Policy working groups	Approximately 22 per year for each of the two largest political groups= 44	1.5	82	104
Other internal working groups, advisory groups and committees	Estimated to be quarterly on average	Estimated 1.5	91 positions	10.5
External positions (additional to those which form part of Cabinet member responsibilities)	Estimated to be quarterly on average	Estimated 1.5	88 positions	10.2
South Yorkshire Authorities and P&C Panel	Minimum 12	1.5	19	6.6
Non-official council meetings with officers etc	Member questionnaire suggests the average (non-Cabinet) member currently spends 3.5 hr/w on non-official council meetings x 75 backbenchers			262.5
Political work	Member questionnaire suggests the average member currently spends 2.9 hr/w on party business x 75 backbenchers			217.5
Community obligations	Member questionnaire suggests the average member currently spends 2.7 hr/w on community obligations x 75 backbenchers			202.5
Engaging with constituents	Member questionnaire suggests the average member currently spends 1.9 hr/w on engaging with constituents x 75 backbenchers			141.8
Dealing with casework	Member questionnaire suggests the average member currently spends 3.5 hr/w on dealing with casework x 75 backbenchers			265.8
Preparation	Member questionnaire suggests the average member currently spends 2.3 hr/w preparing for meetings x 75			172.5
Training and conferences	Member questionnaire suggests the average member currently spends .5 hr/w on training and conferences x 75			37.5
Travel	Member questionnaire suggests the average member			217.5



	currently spends 2.9 hr/w travelling x 75	
Administration	It was apparent from the diary projects, that administration time had not been taken into account. It is estimated that councillors spend several hours each week on administration, and that this will increase	150
<b>Total</b>		<b>1963.55</b>

113. If the total number of hours per week is divided by 75 councillors (so the current membership, excluding the nine Cabinet members), we would come to a total of 26.2 hours per week per councillor. We are aware that councillor estimates as to workload are based on workloads before the move away from Community Assemblies, and that these are likely to increase, significantly for the LEP members and ward lead members.

### Conclusion

114. In light of the above evidence and considerations, it is the submission of Sheffield City Council that the correct size of the Council is 84 councillors, representing, as far as is possible, three member wards.

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