

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee (Special)

Thursday 28 November 2019 at 10.00 am

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

The Press and Public are Welcome to Attend

Membership

Councillors Mick Rooney (Chair), Ian Auckland, Steve Ayris, Ben Curran, Denise Fox, Julie Grocutt, Tim Huggan, Douglas Johnson, Mike Levery, Cate McDonald, Sioned-Mair Richards and Jim Steinke

Substitute Members

In accordance with the Constitution, Substitute Members may be provided for the above Committee Members as and when required.

PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE MEETING

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee comprises the Chairs and Deputy Chairs of the four Scrutiny Committees. Councillor Cate McDonald 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. 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. 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 Deborah Glen, Policy and Improvement Officer, on 0114 27 35065 or email deborah.glen@sheffield.gov.uk

FACILITIES

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.

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE AGENDA
28 NOVEMBER 2019**

Order of Business

- 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. Public Questions and Petitions**
To receive any questions or petitions from members of the public
- 6. Governance Review - Evidence Gathering Session 2**
Report of the Policy and Improvement Officer

10.00 am to 12.30 pm – Local Organisations with an Interest in Governance and Decision Making

Witnesses

10.00 am to 10.45 am – It's Our City

10.45 am to 11.15 am – Nigel Slack, Active Citizen

11.15 am to 11.45 am – Vicky Seddon, Co-ordinator, Sheffield 4 Democracy

11.45 am to 12.30 pm – Discussion and identifying key points to take forwards

12.30 pm to 1.15 pm – Break for Lunch

1.15 pm to 2.15 pm – Views of the Voluntary Sector and Business Community

Witnesses

Maddy Desforges, Chief Executive, Voluntary Action Sheffield

Richard Wright, Policy and Representation, Sheffield Chamber of Commerce

2.15 pm to 3.15 pm – Consideration of Written Evidence Provided through the Online Call for Evidence

3.15 pm to 4.00 pm – Discussion Time

4.00 pm to 4.30 pm – Break

4.30 pm to 5.30 pm – Views of Young People

Witnesses

Youth Cabinet and Youth Advisors
Emma Hinchcliffe, Sheffield Futures

6.00 pm to 8.00 pm – Groups and Individuals Who Asked to Give Evidence in Person through the Online Call for Evidence

Witnesses

Dr Karen Ford
Kevin Poppelwell
Robin Hughes, Joined Up Heritage Sheffield
Cllr Douglas Johnson, Sheffield Green Party

Written submissions from the witnesses are attached

7. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Tuesday, 3rd December, 2019, at 1.00 pm, in the Town Hall

ADVICE TO MEMBERS ON DECLARING INTERESTS AT MEETINGS

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.

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 Audit and Standards Committee in relation to a request for dispensation.

Further advice can be obtained from Gillian Duckworth, Director of Legal and Governance on 0114 2734018 or email gillian.duckworth@sheffield.gov.uk.

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Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee 28th November 2019 10-8pm

Governance Review – Evidence Gathering Session 2

Officer Contact: Emily Standbrook-Shaw
Policy & Improvement Officer
Emily.Standbrook-Shaw@Sheffield.gov.uk
0114 27 35065

As part of the Committee's work looking at Governance, three evidence gathering sessions have been set up to enable the Committee to hear from a range of witnesses, in order to develop a set of principles that should underpin any future decision making system in Sheffield.

This is the second of those evidence gathering sessions and will run as follows:

10am – 12.30pm – Local Organisations with an interest in Governance and Decision Making

Witnesses

10-10.45am – It's Our City

10.45-11.15am – Nigel Slack – Active Citizen

11.15– 11.45am– Vicky Seddon, Co-ordinator, Sheffield 4 Democracy.

11.45 – 12.30pm – discussion and identifying key points to take forwards

12.30-1.15pm – Break for lunch

1.15 -2.15pm – Views of the Voluntary Sector and Business Community

Witnesses

Maddy Desforges, Chief Executive, Voluntary Action Sheffield

Richard Wright, Director, Policy and Representation, Sheffield Chamber of Commerce

2.15-3.15pm - Consideration of written evidence provided through the online Call for Evidence – Report attached (Appendix to follow).

3.15- 4pm – Discussion time

4-4.30pm – Break

4.30pm – 5.30pm – Views of Young People

Witnesses

Youth Cabinet and Youth Advisors

Emma Hinchcliffe, Sheffield Futures

6pm-8pm – Groups and Individuals who asked to give evidence in person through the online call for evidence.

Witnesses

Dr Karen Ford

Kevin Poppelwell

Robin Hughes, Joined Up Heritage Sheffield

Cllr Douglas Johnson, Sheffield Green Party

Written submissions from the witnesses are attached.



Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee 28th November 2019

Evidence Session A – 10am – 12.30pm

Local organisations with an interest in governance and decision making

Written Evidence From:

It's Our City!
Ruth Hubbard
Ann Barr
Woll Newall

Documents attached

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Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee 28th November 2019

Evidence Session A – 10am – 12.30pm

Local organisations with an interest in governance and decision making

Written Evidence From:

Nigel Slack – Active Citizen

Documents attached

- Sheffield Big City Conversation, Independent Governance Event report
 - Transforming Sheffield City Council Governance
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Sheffield's Big City Conversation

Independent Governance Event Report

Nigel Slack

Foreword

Although we have to recognise the issues caused by the delayed response within Council to the Governance Review, this event has helped to clarify some of the issues the city faces that must be addressed by the Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee's review process.

We should also recognise that such an event can never be fully representative of the whole city and our diverse population since it draws on an audience of the interested and willing. That being said individuals at these events often represent not just their own views but the views of their connections with friends, family, colleagues and communities.

Beyond the contributions of the guest speakers, each interesting and varied in their comments, there did emerge a consensus in certain areas. These are well expressed in the ['Key Concerns'](#) on page 8 and well supported by the details from the break out tables and the evidence in [Appendix 1](#). Having read through the report I might phrase these slightly differently, as principles for the design of the proposed change to a committee model, but the impact is effectively the same;

1 Structures - Open & transparent decision making – creating a culture of co-operation between ALL, political parties, stakeholders & the public. Where the question *'How are decisions made?'* is understood by all and supported across the political divides. Clarity in where policies or issues for decisions arise, who is involved in the decision (and why?) and what oversight can be relied upon?

2 Neighbourhoods – Devolved decision making – Developing a role for all parts of the city in how they make decisions for their own communities. Developing a shared approach to commissioning, improving local services and holding service providers from all agencies accountable for their performance, including a role in challenging decisions that affect their community.

3 Transparency – Open information – Putting in place the means for ALL Councillors, stakeholders and the public to access information and evidence used to support decision-making from the beginning of the process and a more open and embedded place for the public in that decision making structure. Transparency of challenge is also vital, reducing criticisms or challenges to annual statistics is not a way to improve trust or confidence in the structures or culture of organisations.

Read the full report and draw your own conclusions, something I hope will become a standard part of decision-making beyond May 2020, then help design a set of principles to support the future of the city, not your Political Party.

Nigel Slack

Active Citizen

Overview

On 30th October 2019, a Big City Conversation event was held at Sheffield Town Hall, independently chaired by active citizen, Nigel Slack. The event was the first of two independently-chaired events as part of the Big City Conversation, giving members of the public the opportunity to talk about how they want to engage with the council on issues that matter to them and contribute to the debate on how Sheffield City Council makes decisions ahead of the referendum that will take place on 7th May 2020.



A governance review is currently being undertaken to examine the principles of good local decision making and the strengths and weaknesses of Leader/Cabinet models and Committee Systems, looking at different examples from across the UK. The governance review is being carried out by the Overview and Management Scrutiny Committee (OSMC), who will be holding evidence gathering sessions before reporting back to Sheffield's Full Council in January 2020.

Hearing from key voices: panel representations

The event began with a panel of representatives of groups, both local and national, with an interest and perspective on the topic of governance.

The first contributor on the panel was **Anne Barr from 'It's Our City!'** the community-led network of residents in Sheffield working on issues of interest who submitted the petition for a referendum on governance models. Anne argued that through their campaign work on the petition, citizens had expressed frustrations with decision making in Sheffield. Anne said that 'It's Our City' would like to see decision making 'opened up' to make it better for everyone in the city, including:

- a cost-neutral change to a modern committee system.
- cross-party cooperation and a meaningful role for all councillors.
- community and stakeholder representation – beyond 'consultation'
- independent experts, both local and national, consulted in decision making
- an end to tribal politics and to the whip system
- equality and inclusion across the city.

- transparency and real consultation.
- expertise in designing the new system – internal or external.

The full text of Anne's comments are available here:

<https://www.itsoursheffield.co.uk/speech-by-anne-barr-on-behalf-of-its-our-city-30-10-19-at-sheffield-town-hall/>

The second speaker was **Vicky Seddon from Sheffield for Democracy**, a campaign group for more representative democracy. Vicky spoke in favour of the debate about new governance for Sheffield, arguing that it is important to consider the wider aspects of political culture and ways of working in our democracy whilst considering the formal decision making structures. This included:

- we should also consider moving to four-yearly elections as a way to bring longer-term focus and stronger culture of accountability which is undermined by the current approach whereby elections are held three years out of every four
- The importance of Councillor training and development, particularly in the effective chairing of meetings
- public consultation undertaken should be appropriate for the size of the issues being discussed. Therefore, methods such as citizens' assemblies could be used to inform decision making and alter the way in which decisions are made and the culture surrounding them.

Sheffield for Democracy recently published a short paper entitled '*Improvements we seek to local democracy in Sheffield City Council*' and this is available here:

<https://sheffieldfordemocracy.wordpress.com/2019/07/15/sheffield-for-democracy-improvements-we-seek-to-local-democracy-in-sheffield-city-council/>

Maddy Desforges, the Chief Executive of Voluntary Action Sheffield, provided a perspective of the voluntary sector, community and faith sector (VCF) on democracy. Maddy emphasised that:

- for the communities and the VCF sector, it is more about *how* people are able to influence decisions rather than the structures through which this happens.
- It is vital that any approach we take in Sheffield must enable communities from every part of the city to engage and have their voice heard,
- it is vital to see ongoing engagement and accountability from the Council to enhance collaboration between sectors and to make things as accessible as possible to the public.

Richard Wright from Sheffield Chamber of Commerce and Industry offered a perspective from Sheffield's business community. He argued that:

- The starting point should be identifying what it is that we want to achieve before creating a new structure
- Business would want any new governance to support long-term sustainability, certainty and accountability, enabling businesses to deliver employment and wealth creation in the city.

The next member of the panel was **Mark Edgell from the Local Government Association (LGA)**. The LGA works to ensure local councils are heard by national government, aiming to influence items on the agenda so local authorities can provide local solutions. Mark spoke of having worked with a number of local authorities, some working under a committee system and others under the leader/cabinet model. Mark's key message was that a local authority's governance model is less important than good local authority governance. . Mark suggested:

- it is important that Sheffield assess different governance models apolitically to ensure the system which is put in place works for the city and is sustainable.
- Changing systems is not a simple process and therefore examining what works and what doesn't in the current system is more important than just the alternative structures;
- Do not look upon this as a binary choice - there are different designs and hybrid models which could be introduced.
- Sheffield should try to design principles from which to then build a system in order to increase the chances of establishing a model that is strong with cross-party buy in for the long term.

The final speaker on the panel was **Ian Parry from the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS)**. The CfPS are a leading organisation on governance and scrutiny, promoting governance and scrutiny as a means to more effective decision making. Ian commented on the ground-breaking nature of this conversation in Sheffield. With Sheffield having a governance referendum as the result of a petition from citizens, it highlights the importance of having conversations like the one at this event. Ian emphasised:

- importance of using the conversation and engagement to define attributes as opposed to defining a system.
- vital to consider the barriers which cannot be overcome, for example the legal requirements (eg. where councillors are the only ones able to make decisions and spend money)
- look beyond binary model choices and consider hybrids and examine the opportunity for strong community links with robust engagement culture.

Engagement and discussion: feedback from the roundtables

Following on from the panel presentation the floor was opened to the audience for questions, a summary of which can be found in the appendices of this report. The theme of the questions mainly revolved around accountability and residents' understanding of what happens in the Council with the need for the better transparency.

The event then broke out into six tables, five with a specific theme and one with the expert panel who were there to advise and answer any further questions. The five themes were:

- Decision Making
- Councillors
- Challenge and Scrutiny
- Transparency
- Devolving Power.

Each table was facilitated to support discussions and attendees were also encouraged to complete comment cards in response to prompt questions which have been summarised in the narrative below. All the comments received are listed in [Appendix 1](#).

Table 1: Decision making

The discussion on the first table emphasised the vital role of citizen involvement in decision-making and that this be at a geographical level which makes most sense for people and communities:

- **Role of citizens** - Participants strongly emphasised a desire to have greater involvement for the public in decision making and greater empowerments for citizens, bringing in different voices into decision making forums.
- **Accountability and proportionate representation** - there were a number of comments about the importance of decision making having a range of voices. This included 'experts' (with the right skills and experience), citizens, co-opted independents and Elected Members from different parties.
- **Subsidiarity** – there were a number of comments made about the importance of decisions being taken at the most appropriate level – ie. with and closer to citizens or through neighbourhood level structures/committees that are more focused on the needs of specific communities and places.

Table 2: the role of Councillors

The second table discussed the role of Councillors, highlighting the importance of a positive working culture between Councillors between parties and between wards. The key points made were:

- For many, **the role of their Ward Councillor needs to reflect the needs of local people** and participants would like it if party politics could be removed from discussions.
- **Holding elections differently could have a role here** - all out elections every four years with all councillors serving the same four year term, instead of thirds which Sheffield City Council currently operates under.
- While there is now web-casting available for meetings to be watched by anyone at any time, comments imply that **the public need to be made more aware of what it is the Council is doing** and have this pushed more widely as an available resource.
- **Member behaviour and standards** – sense that citizens have expectations about the behaviour of Councillors in office (uphold Nolan principles).

Table 3: challenge and scrutiny

The importance of formal scrutiny of decisions featured heavily in the Challenge and Scrutiny table discussion and in the feedback. In particular:

- **Member skills** – importance of supporting Councillors to have the skills to undertake robust scrutiny of decisions
- **Independence in the scrutiny process** – a keenness to have different, independent voices involved in scrutiny committees, designing-in roles for citizens, community organisations and expert voices.
- **Pre-scrutiny of decisions** – opportunity to think about when scrutiny takes place so that scrutiny are involved before decisions are made to check that the process towards a decision has been robust.

Table 4: transparency

The next table discussed transparency, highlighting the importance of awareness of accountability and the public nature of meetings. Some of the feedback from the postcards highlighted:

- **Transparency is important to people** but that the Council (and other public services) need to be able to inform citizens to help them understand the issues and what impact their engagement will have.

- **Vital that public involvement is cross-city** so that it is not just those who would regularly be involved in Council discussions. Needs broad, representative coverage of different demographics in the city.
- Importance of **consulting local communities and connecting with community networks** to improve transparency and reach different voices.
- **Transparency and accountability were rated highly** in the discussions on the other tables too, implying the need to ensure any system going forward would be fully transparent and easy to understand from the perspective of someone outside the Council.

Table 5: devolving power

The final table theme received lots of positive feedback comments from participants in favour of devolving powers into the community.

- **Clearer statement of who can make decisions** – eg. Councillors set policy direction; fine for officers to make the day-to-day decisions within strategy guidelines.
- **Strengthening local decision making** – a number of comments for ward / neighbourhood / sub-neighbourhood structures to take decisions closer to people and places.
- **Importance of safeguards around devolved powers** – there were some concerns voiced about the ‘messy’ complexity of devolution to localities and examples of challenges that have occurred elsewhere (London Boroughs)
- **Diverse voices** - importance of broadening the diversity of opinions and voices which are heard in the City and representative democracy
- **Physical location of meetings** - moving the location of meetings out into the communities in order to try and improve the connectivity between the Council and the community.

Key concerns

At the end of the event, participants were asked to identify two key concerns that they wanted to see addressed in the new governance model. There were a range of views (see [Appendix 2](#)) but several key themes were clearly identifiable from the comments:

- **The importance of strengthening citizen voice and understanding of decision making** – clear communication and harnessing community networks to connect people with the city’s democracy
- **Neighbourhoods and localities** – empowering and strengthening decision making, engagement and involvement below the city level.

- **Culture not structure** – the ways of working and willingness to be more focused on the city’s overall outcomes, quality of decision making, cross-party co-operation and public involvement.

Next Steps

Following on from this event the Big City Conversation will continue to be open to public feedback with an online survey open to the public available here: <http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/bigcityconversation> and events to be held post-election in every ward in Sheffield.

The governance review is being undertaken by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee (OSMC), all meetings of which are available to watch publicly on the Sheffield City Council website.

The timeline for this process means that the OSMC will be having hearings on the 26th and 28th November with a full report being considered on the 18th December before going to Full Council on 8th January 2020.

Appendix 1 – table discussion comments

Decision Making - Table 1

I would like to see more online referendums on big decisions.

Would encourage more online debates as people work different hours only paid charity types get their voices out.

Decision should be taken as much as possible by consensus with politically proportionate make up

Councils have to be able to take some decisions quickly. This needs recognising.

Decision -making should take advantage of much greater Internet consecutiveness of citizens. Whilst protecting those who are not connected

Local people make choices: 3 per ward, every 4 years elect all at elections to scrutinise all at once too quick a process

all public - coming from position of youth and Councillor cabinet member- elect local - local are expert

System needs to change because easier to change culture when there's upheaval.

Obviously not! A proper understanding of subsidiarity needs to be thought through, whereby some officers ie local neighbourhood committees should be able to take detailed decisions within city wide priorities and parameters

Can we have a neighbourhood Committees as well as topic committees. If yes, then they ought to meet within the neighbourhoods and meetings should have consultation discussions before the Committee takes its decision.

Reports only when v complex or controversial issues and spend less money on experts and more on local consultation

As creative a process as possible - see my comments about pre- scrutiny and analysis of impact to inform decision

Why is time not given to listen to communities and empower them to design and deliver their own initiatives. Everything is rushed and decisions are not made by all members of Sheffield. I work with a number of people from a variety of cultures and they are never truly represented at decision at decision making level.

On committees - involve people in as many ways as possible in as many ways as possible. Doesn't have to be only through council communities could be involved at local level. Important to be flexible about how this is done and by whom.

Committee should be about exploring options and referring options to a full council decision.

If on committee proportionate to the number of Councillors.

Independent chairperson

Why not have citizen chairs of committees genuinely independent people who can skilfully run meetings and elicit respectful conduct and productive behaviour from all involved

Membership - not restricted to councillors - involve co-opted members open meetings

Who elects the committee chair?

What about sharing the chair role across the range of political groups.

The chair role should not be political "whipping" of the committee to deliver the expected decision.

Decision Making - at meetings- Councillors to declare affiliations party ward/community link

Keep a record (with the decision they made) of these affiliation. to help accountability

Decision Making - experts from outside

Bring in community groups - as way to access views of the population you represent to increase transparency

Committees to include representatives across geography/social inequalities and political parties

The people on each committee should be the people will the skills and experience to do the job regardless of the political party.

The public should be involved and of local councillors were able to represent their wards and have a real voice.

Flat-pack democracy - every councillor to have a voice working towards a collective aim regardless of politics with a large P.

Park the party politics.

What is the problem

Culture

Political literacy

Power

Table 2- Councillors

Councillors need to work together - there are petty rivalries between wards even where councillors are from the same party. This is impeding the greater good and its not doing anyone any favours. All about personal ego's and not people's benefit.

Councillor's job is to serve the city. I don't see that this is happening currently. I want to see an end to party political posturing.

Councillors - Need to be able to have some power to represent the people in their area and not have to follow political party mandates on all issues.

How elect? - Think shift in attitude and level of power more important than how often elected - marginally favour every 4 years.

Rules of written behaviour - make local accountability a stronger mandate than priority? Stick to Nolan process.

Representation regular local open meetings on local issues where people are motivated to attend because they see change.

Once every 4 years

Votes turnout but I think this is overall party

Smaller parties

Councillor increase in pay but less of them.

Visible website highlighting what they are voting on so public can comment.

Councillors job is to represent the electorate first, and their party second.

Annual elections are harmful - too much political point scoring.

Move to all-out elections every 4 years

Councillor behaviour - uphold and enforce the Nolan Principles. Behave respectfully.

Make the public in all its forms aware of what the council is doing.

All councillors need to have a proper role of influence and something real to get their teeth into. Currently it feels as if cabinet leads are too much first amongst equals.

Cultural Issue - Council valuing the assets of the multiples of active communities in Sheffield.

Elections every 4 years.

Councillors should follow the Nolan Principles. Openly insulting the residents is poor. I want to see consistency, transparency, honesty.

Table 3 Challenge & Scrutiny

Scrutiny - it is totally opaque, unclear how it works and so seems a "done deal" .

What research is provided and how is this scrutinised when it is provided. Not only to councillors to make decisions, but also at the cabinet/committee structure?

Do councillors and others need training in how to do scrutiny?

To avoid very costly mistakes. Do we need ways to "prototype" plans for public engagement - eg Division Street pedestrian scheme. Role play and scenario modelling.

We need to be more inclusive to ensure all voices are heard.

Need to develop better ways to engage people, going to meet in different venues; running externally facilitated committees; using social media.

Why are scrutiny committees only made up of councillors?

Inherently flawed scrutiny should happen before big decisions are made - they should check that the process towards the decision has been fair, informed and reflective of the people it will affect.

If an issue affects a community then people's views should be considered 2 events should happen in their area to engage the community.

What scrutiny and challenges bodies work elsewhere?
can we have examples of these to help make the decision?

Do this before big decisions are made
Is there a way of involving the public online in scrutiny
Should be able to scrutinise as scrutiny committees to challenge on behalf of the public.

The process needs to have clear and good consultation risk testing and an impact assessment etc. before decision, rather than the processes being slowed by the possibility of post - decision scrutiny.

i.e. Harness creative energies to get the best possible solutions rather than having people attacking decisions after the event and robust accounts of why the decision was taken.

Should be seen as critical friend

Public should be able be involved in the scrutiny

Non-defensive leadership that invites forceful and powerful scrutiny by other councillors with access to expert advice.
scrutiny officers must be politically impartial.

should consult within the wider community not just our members.
Public entitled to feedback on what is decided.
Include wider views - agencies local communities, groups like your council.

People don't know enough to challenge decisions - need to engage people if you expect them to have informed views.

Problem with present system is who decides what is on the agenda.
How do you ask people on scrutiny committees to scrutinise what is important to my community
cabinet members unreachable

Scrutiny should be a "critical friend" . Leave party politics out of it the focus needs to be on what's best for the city and its people.

Currently, scrutiny/asking awkward questions is seen as challenging power. Actually, it's good to have a devil's advocate on board.

Scrutiny committees need to have independent experts on them.

Culture is key - it should be possible for anyone to ask a question and not be jeered at, belittled or lied to.

Table 4 : Transparency

Just because open forum may be difficult to facilitate and may not aid a strict decision it can guide this and provide citizen's voices. These are relevant and useful.

How educated about issues will people be before decisions are opened up for scrutiny.

Use community groups to cascade information and bring back challenge to scrutiny, don't assume everyone wants to watch webcast.

Transparency: consultation of local areas in advance of things is much more important than webcasting decisions that people can do without.

Reports - yes to real evidence

Yes- consultation in advance?

Think imaginatively with confidence.

You cannot have transparency without understanding of an issue. How is the council going to engage citizens and help them to understand the issues and the structure and then be engaged enough to provide scrutiny and be interested enough to look for the transparency. If there is nobody looking then what is the point in being transparent?.

How accessible is the process and documentation and how do people know about this?

Webcasting is an improvement.

There is a big lack of transparency in Sheffield. E.g. local plan not being available for 4 years. Why cant it be made public?

Yes webcasting

Some form of snappy 3 minute summary on output of council on website /FB/Twitter

Current system often reveals what seems to be a strategic operation in allowing the public very limited knowledge of any particular issue, e.g. tree survey, asked public only about trees on their street, no plan for the citywide scope of felling revealed!!!

Have had very disappointing experiences of promise made about timely open transparency consultation.

How to ensure transparency without further excluding the group/people at margins

Proper use of experts for balance and critical "friend" scrutiny.

Certainly webcasting and information available on the net but websites need to be well designed and easy to use which is not currently the case. Also not everyone is competent with IT and information needs to be conveyed by other means as to what can be accessed.

How are we going to ensure that the views expressed in this consultation are representative of the city?

Around this room there may be 100 people all of whom are similar demographics. How do we engage the unengaged and really make this a " big city conversation?"

Clarity on how a decision has been made. Openness of meetings for public can understand process.

All committees webcast and make it interactive so Jo or Joanne Public can interact. And set up online forums.

Table 5: Devolving Power

Officers: They will make small executive decisions all the time and as long as they clear policy and strategy guidelines to guide that work and that is fine.

Policy decisions should be remit of councillors have taken their decisions on a regular basis.

Ward decisions

Need to be about coordinating role with other statutory bodies as well as allowing funds from council budgets.

Yes devolved decisions , owe citywide setting of ERICA

Overall policy to ensure that poor communities are not out voiced by middle class.

What happened to the Ward Plans?

US style Alderman.

Schemes affecting wards should have local representation.

So I'd expect from a system that local councillors would be involved regardless of what party they belong to.

Take all council meetings out of town to all sometimes, like idea of community representative.

The city needs its own constitution. Even if there are legislative constraints we can craft multi - faceted structure and local rules, local structures, methods of decision moving, voting, debate. We do NOT need to simply follow the limited options before us.

It is impossible to grow citizen behaviour and democracy at the current scale. We need neighbourhoods at the sub ward level these are at least 150 neighbourhoods in Sheffield At a neighbourhood level we could use direct participatory decision making to make decisions at a local level and increase active citizenship

The lack of specifying of alternatives makes pros and cons comment very difficult. Neighbourhood devolution can be an opportunity for extremism and abandoned in south London borough for this reason.

Devolution can be really messy¹ People don't necessarily agree.
How do we deal with difference?

But "messy" can be good if it means that more people really feel involved, not necessarily deeply but enough to have a voice.

Non-elected people do make delegated decisions
Needs to be more clear about how it all works.

There needs to be more political literacy.

So that people can get involved in a meaningful way for example tonight was there a representative demographic?

Yes if they have expertise eg trees!! Amey

Their needs to be more culture shift eg transparency power?

How do we hear voices who aren't being heard in this conversation

What does this actually mean, more info please

I would like people like Andy Jackson at Heeley Development Trust to be able to be involved properly.

Needs more transparency and scrutiny.

Appendix 2 – key concerns

Really important how this is communicated to people - need to be responsive to the needs of individuals and communities.

That the council actually listens to people and responds - issues suggests they haven't done this.

Councillors represent their constituents they need to be more proactive in communities. I never see or hear from my councillor unless there's an election and they want my vote.

The new model should allow members of the public to have a voice before, during and after big decisions

The public should sit on scrutiny committees

It should be a much quicker and clearer process to obtain information about council discussions.

Be flexible about how council engages with different groups and individuals.

Use communities and community groups, but don't forget the lonely (increased aging population)

End to the political whip for councillors

Committees to be formed on the basis of the best skills and knowledge, rather than party or cronyism.

Proper use of advice from experts from wherever its available.

Lack of transparency of decision making process

How will this council rebuild the trust lost during the campaign?

What is the main reason for the delay to affecting this referendum?

How to make the process more transparent?

How can council show they value the community assets to make this Big City Conversation a continuous one.

We need to make everyone's voices heard from all cultures, this has been tokenistic in the past. Real efforts and time needs to be invested.

Upskill communities to be active in decision making.

Solve/overcome party rivalries for greater good and rivalries within party also

Engaging everyday in the city not just those who know how to campaign.

How do we increase % of people voting in local elections.

How do we make every vote count if not then make councillors have a meaningful role in decision making.

Conversation with wider community e.g. make sure listen
Money in transport, people don't listen at council level doesn't work.

Change no "all-out" elections rather than annual.

Culture is key. However, governance and scrutiny happens, it needs to be viewed as a positive thing, not a negative.

Learn from mistakes!

In all of this conversation tonight has been said about officers who benefit and advise councillors and participants in committee meetings. Sometimes officers can't offer impartial advice or don't brief councillors about alternatives, sometimes officers aren't compelled to account for how they have fulfilled policy. My experience has been with Transport.

What powers do councillors have?

Considering how national government has spent 40 years removing powers from local authorities then councils have become monitored and enforces of government policy or the government has removed responsibilities e.g. In education academies. Right to buy has destroyed municipal housing.

Will the new system invest in scrutiny to avoid expensive mistakes?

Will scrutiny address the spirit of planning and execution as well as the technical aspects?

The OSMC: deal with the issues of trust going forward. Perceptions are vital and their work must be demonstrably "honest and trustworthy"

The OSMC: As soon as the process is delayed (including how the system to be voted on in referendum will be decided).

More transparency and accountability.

More influence for individual councillors who are who are in the minority e.g. my councillor is Paul Turpin.

Whatever the outcome of the referendum, please remember that democracy doesn't start and end at elections. The petition and referendum are a wake-up call that the culture needs to change.

Overall culture changes systems won't work without that
Encourage thinking and action about our assets not just money.

Working out better engagement - e.g. using community organisations. Define terms of discussion better.

We need a much higher level of democratic debate and decision making. This requires local focus we need a much more sophisticated system and local decision making, a constitution for Sheffield.

I would like to see better scrutiny put in place and feedback to community groups.
My concern with council is they are scoring points against each other and it becomes very annoying.

This is not a way to do engagement as terms not defined, break out questions for too complicated for a short discussion and no facilitation- no pros and cons of any changes.

Behaviours of Councillors was not addressed.

How to minimise party politics and unite all councillors for the sake of the city.
How to ensure the council never ever gets into situations like the tree saga or imprisoning residents etc. again.

Quality of decision makers and decision making processes are what matter so change to governance structure won't help of their own accord(wrote this before hearing mark E who I agree with) Citizens are much more individually connected through the Internet than when local government structures were established. Whatever is decided needs to take account of this whilst protecting the position of those who are not connected.

Political proportionality really matters ensures continuity broadens debate and frames consensus.

The future already exists it is unevenly distributed somewhere (in the up or elsewhere) Something that really works well already exists - nick it don't reinvent it.

Much more real accountant ability and engagement with local people.
Clear reports, consultation, evidence gathering etc. before decisions rather than afterwards.
Change the system in order to be able to change the culture.

How can neighbourhoods be better represented in decision making?

How can we encourage the political parties to co-operate more and to impact duplicate opinions?

Don't get hung up on structure. Focus on design principles.
Whatever structures are proposed there must be better scrutiny and challenge.
Learn from elsewhere.

Councillors need to be held to Nolan principles in all aspects of their work.
Please provide clear flowcharts showing how decisions are made in the council.

Scrutiny - who decides what and when is scrutinised.
How can local issue be introduced into council decisions.

A voluntary limitation on the period for which councillors can serve(say 10 years

max)

Scrutiny does not really work its like marking their own homework transparency - council too top down why can't more information be made public

Meaningful role for all councillors

Decision making for the good of city not individual parties - end of tribalism.

How is the proposed output going to address the need for cultural and behaviour change?

This is a key priority!

Which system will but address the parochial nature of the city- if communities are divided across the city.

What wider education of the general public/youth will be undertaken to ensure better community engagement

Publicity of what the Big City Conversation means to citizens.

Engaging the youth.

Transforming Sheffield City Council Governance

Nigel Slack - Active Citizen

“... to build a city at the forefront of innovation ...”

“To undertake a wide-ranging governance review ...”

“To build a 'best practice' process of change ...”

The Vision

Our vision is **to build a city at the forefront of innovation**, leading thinking and practice around local democracy and governance. As part of this we want to ensure communities and stakeholders have real confidence in the way we work together to make decisions and there is greater clarity and opportunities about how they can influence policy and services.

To undertake a wide-ranging governance review that develops a shared vision of design principles and that has the confidence of all stakeholders, Councillors (cross party), Communit-

ies, Business and Council Officers. Developing, co-operatively, a way of governing and ways of working that are ***transparent, accountable, clear*** and ***honest***, fit for the 21st Century and a model solution for our radical and innovative City.

To build a 'best practice' process of change and a clear timeline for the implementation of a modernised committee system, seen as such by all stakeholders and that has a focus on good policy, procedures and processes rather than personalities and party politics.

Introduction

This is an important and pivotal time for Sheffield.

Austerity has bitten hard, seriously impacting on traditional ways of working and the way the city makes decisions. Local Government has borne the brunt of this austerity and the city is at a point where it is struggling to provide public services in a sustainable way and we are coming to terms with Government funding no longer being available to solve our issues and address our problems.

The city economy is changing as advanced & innovative new manufacturing is

impacting on the type of jobs we see increasing in number and those we see reducing. Much of the response to the loss of funding in the city's public purse has, until now, been about managing expectations, salami slicing budgets & reducing many services in real terms, whilst trying to protect the city's most vulnerable. We have also placed great emphasis on the potential of inward investment to bolster city finances and this has, at times, been to the detriment of our built landscape and our sense of Sheffield as a unique place to live, work, learn & play.

The demographics of the city (the variety of people) is also changing, bringing new challenges and opportunities as new business brings a new diversity of people to the city. Sometimes this seems to create greater levels of division between old and new or wealth and poverty. Different areas of our city have different (greater or lesser) opportunities to help themselves and to support their community economies. This needs to be addressed by creating new ways of decision making and distribution of resources that deliver equitably for those different areas and the neighbourhoods and communities within the city.

The way the City Council makes decisions is also at a pivotal point. Over the last few years the system

of governance known as 'Strong Leader & Cabinet' has come in for criticism as being undemocratic and for concentrating power in a small group of Elected Councillors, leaving many of our elected representatives, of all political parties, feeling ineffective and powerless. This current system can lead to decisions being made without proper scrutiny by either administration or opposition parties and an over reliance on the reports and opinions of the unelected Council staff that support the decision makers work.

The city's current 'Strong Leader' model of governance was effectively imposed on Sheffield as the least worst option when new systems of running Councils were introduced

by government in 2000. The aim was to make decision making quicker, and more effective for a dynamic economy. The limitations have only become apparent in the current period of austerity as more and more people have questioned the executive making decisions without what is seen as sufficient consultation with the people of the city and particularly those most affected by many of these decisions. The Localism Act of 2011 gave Councils the option of changing the 'Strong Leader' model for a new approach to 'Committee' form of governance. Many Councils have made this change, others have been forced to do so through community action or changes in their political party balance, and in nearly every case the reason for making the

change has been to improve the democracy of decision making.

Sheffield is now choosing to make that change to a modernised committee structure and to do so as part of a wider radical 'best practice' review of the way the entire Council operates. The changes that have affected and continue to affect Councils since 2008 do not look likely to change in the immediate future but to do nothing in these circumstances would be to fail the people, businesses and communities of the city. This document sets out our initial plans for how to make this happen.

Key Goals

- 1.** Residents, businesses and decision makers become part of a comprehensive '**New Deal**' **governance model** that they have been a part of designing and that delivers good governance for all.
- 2.** A way of working that delivers for the diverse neighbourhoods and communities of the city and is responsive to the needs they identify.
- 3.** A way of governing that is **transparent, accountable, clear** and **honest**.
- 4.** Governance that is fit for the 21st Century and a model solution for the radical and innovative City of Sheffield, based on best practice and co-designed by a broad range of stakeholders.

What Success Looks Like

A decision to change to a modern 'committee' governance model delivered through Council during August 2019.

To set up a cross party 'Constitution Review' body with a broad membership including stakeholders of the city, lead by an independent chair during October 2019.

A commitment to define the detail of the change to top level Governance during January 2020.

A commitment to develop the scope of the full review during January 2020.

A commitment to include community and 3rd sector organisations at the heart of the constitution review process, alongside Council Officers, Councillors, and external Professional Advisers versed in Local Government & change processes.

A proposed change to ways of working that has the support of all stakeholders.

A clear and comprehensive programme for change agreed and approved in Council by May 2020.

Scope of Work

Challenge 1

The majority of the residents of the city do not understand the way the city is governed and do not trust the governance system

Challenge 2

Turnout at local elections continues to be very low and residents do not understand the need for elections almost every year

Commitment 1

To design a way of governing the city that has the confidence of all stakeholders in the city's future and to invest in the people of the city to co-design a system that represents the interests of all residents in decision making

Commitment 2

To review the way we choose our elected representatives and introduce an election scheme that better engages residents, increases voter turnout and better reflects the way voters actually vote

Challenge 3

Many Councillors, of all parties, feel left out of the decision making in the city and the divisive, antagonistic party politics of Council meetings

Challenge 4

Residents feel too much decision making is reserved to the highest levels of city representation and that neighbourhoods are treated as a problem to be managed

Challenge 5

Residents do not understand the roles & responsibilities of elected Councillors and what they should expect of their representatives

Commitment 3

Design a system, involving all parties, that reflects the political balance of the Council and puts this at the heart of how decision making bodies are apportioned

Commitment 4

Develop, alongside local residents and community groups, a structure that devolves decision making to the most local possible designated level and that includes spending powers and, potentially, legal structures that support that power

Commitment 5

Develop clear and objective understanding of the roles & responsibilities of Councillors, define expected performance measures and publish these

Challenge 6

Residents are unhappy with the way some Councillors treat each other and the public and the seeming impunity with which bad behaviour is tolerated

Challenge 7

Residents do not understand the system of scrutiny currently operated and feel it does not work in achieving accountability within Council

Challenge 8

There is concern that many decisions within Council do not take sufficient note of expert or even external evidence or advice and rely too much on overworked staff to provide all the potential answers to an issue

Commitment 6

Support Councillors with clear codes of conduct across all aspects of their public life and including clear and appropriate sanctions for breaches of such codes

Commitment 7

Review the way decisions and policies are scrutinised to make it more front loaded, before decisions are made, and with stronger powers to recall or review decisions

Commitment 8

Design a system that enables a broader consultation before decisions are made, includes experts in the field on decision making groups and allows evidence to be submitted, unedited, to decision making structures

Challenge 9

Current management & officer structures are opaque to most of the public and there has developed, over recent years, a lack of trust that the structure supports the councillors or the public

Challenge 10

Transparency is always vital and an issue that underpins all of the above and some current information provision is seen as skewed or difficult to access

Commitment 9

Review the management structure of the Council and endeavour to design flatter more accountable organisational responsibilities and to ensure clear water between support staff and decision making

Commitment 10

Integrate webcasting into all decision making bodies, publish information in an easily accessible way and devolve the sources of information to the most local level possible

Proposed Outcomes

This Transforming Sheffield City Council Governance vision outlines the reasons change must happen, the goals we need to achieve and the challenges the city must work through to deliver our long term radical ambition of building a city at the forefront of innovation and leading thinking & practice around local democracy and governance.

This process will not be an 'easy fix' and carrying on as usual is no longer an option. It will be challenging and uncomfortable at times, but we must grab the opportunity for a better Sheffield, serving **all the people of the city**. We need to seize the opportunity to take the city of Sheffield a radical step forward by working together with everyone cooperatively, based on best practice and lead by National and International expertise.

To do anything else would be to fail the people, businesses and communities of the city.

For more information please contact
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The Public Interest

“What Is Going On?” - Questioning Politics At
A Local Level Here In Sheffield And Beyond.



Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee 28th November 2019

Evidence Session A – 10am – 12.30pm

Local organisations with an interest in governance and decision making

Written Evidence From:

Vicky Seddon – Co-ordinator, Sheffield for Democracy.

Documents attached

- Response to Online Call for Evidence
 - Sheffield for Democracy Improvements we seek to local democracy in Sheffield City Council
-

Sheffield for Democracy response to Call for Evidence – Governance Review 2019

What does good decision making look like to you?

Timely, well informed, taking account of differing perspectives and different effects on individuals and communities, clear explanation of why taken.

What is important to you or your organisation about the way Sheffield City Council makes decisions?

That there has been opportunity for different perspectives to be heard and debated and in a respectful manner. That the people the most affected have a voice and that voice is heard. That there is sufficient time scale for decisions to be put into practice and problems ironed out before they are put to the test in an election. One year between elections means this is not possible, meaning that difficult decisions are put off. We need to change the time cycle of elections.

What do you like about the way in which Sheffield City Council makes decisions at the moment?

Not sure how to answer this.

What don't you like about the way in which Sheffield City Council makes decisions at the moment?

Some very poor decisions have been made; Mount Pleasant for example. Budget cuts mean there are not enough staff to service decision making: community assemblies were shut down partly, I believe, because there were not enough staff to service them. So input from communities was reduced. The process that supposedly replaced them have never worked. Scrutiny processes have limited effectiveness.

What features would you like to see in any new decision making structure in Sheffield?

They must be efficient and effective.
Longer operational timescales so that problems can be sorted before facing the test of an election
More resources allocated for decisions made by local communities
More cross party consultation and working together

Is there anything to avoid in any new decision making structure in Sheffield?

Don't make it look as if there are small concessions that act to buy people off. Must be a genuine cross party process with a built in review of how any changes are working out

Would you like to add any further information regarding Sheffield City Council's decision making processes?

A move to a 4 year all-out election process would assist in making cross party working more constructive.



Improvements we seek to local democracy in Sheffield City Council

Purpose: *Our preferred outcomes of democratic renewal*

- a. More people participating and engaged
- b. A greater cross-section of Sheffield's population doing so
- c. Considerably more people reporting confidence in the democratic and political process
- d. Greater political stability between elections
- e. Greater cross-party cooperation
- f. More decisions affecting particular localities taken locally
- g. Higher turn-out rates at local elections

Structure:

1. Election Schedule : All out local elections every 4 years

Purposes:

- a. Makes a clear decision about who the people of Sheffield empower to run the city, and to have a reasonable timescale to make necessary changes.
- b. Currently, with elections every year for three years and then a fallow year, parties are constantly in election mode, attacking each other instead of seeking to work together to deal with the huge issues that the government–enforced halving of the local budget has created
- c. Would make possible a culture of cooperation between the different political parties.

Advantage:

- a. Creates a multi-member election in each ward, which paves way for PR
- b. Means that the time currently spent every year re-appointing to committees and bodies is unnecessary/hugely reduced.
- c. Gives more time and space for decisions to be taken, implemented, reviewed, difficulties ironed out

2. *Committee structure: change from the strong leader/cabinet model to a committee system, to enable more involvement of more councillors, and also the public, in decision making.*

There is certainly a ground-swell of opinion (coming both from the public and from within the Administration's party and politicians) that the current system leaves many councillors feeling they have little say in decision making, other than through rather drastic scrutiny "calling-in" processes. This can (and sometimes has) led to decisions that don't have wide consensus. This does not mean Sheffield for Democracy supports going back to the original committee structure, which was seen as inefficient. With the huge reduction in the number of staff the council is able to employ, there has to be a careful balance between the resources for decision making and the resources for service delivery. Certainly, improvements in City Governance is one of Sheffield for Democracy's current priorities. And not all committee structures are by definition inefficient. A new system needs to be designed, a different, efficient and effective system that gives more voice to more councillors. This could include committees that contribute to decision making. Our suggestion is that the parties find a way to work together, to come up with a proposal that is then put into operation for an agreed trial period, and is subject to review and amendment in light of the experience. Such a change in how to address concerns is likely to facilitate the other improvements we are suggesting.

Fairness in representation:

Proportionality in committee membership, chairs and vice-chairs.

1. We cannot move to a PR system for elections of our councillors until national government makes this possible. But we can respect the view of voters by using the proportions of votes cast to the different parties to allocate seats on committees and proportions of chairs and vice chairs
2. Proportional support from officers on policy Initiatives.

Input:

Better involvement in, and ownership of, decision-making by neighbourhoods

This is one of Sheffield for Democracy's campaign priorities. Both Labour and Lib Dem administrations have over a period of time set up forms of community engagement: area panels; community councils; local area partnerships. We currently do not have a functioning system. We would like to see a project established to engage across the city and across the parties and across

communities, to find a workable model that includes participation in decision making by neighbourhoods. This should include some local decision making on spending in the localities.

There should be involvement of non-councillors via neighbourhood engagement and also through involvement of specialist expertise, including from the voluntary and community sector.

Various new approaches to policy development could be employed to facilitate this: for example, citizens' assemblies or juries; local community assemblies; focus groups. If used, a review of their effectiveness should be undertaken, so that the circumstances in which they are likely to be effective can be judged.

Some functions would lend themselves to such local decision making; others would not. But judgements about economies of scale need to be balanced with consideration of social value. To underpin this, the City needs to make a commitment to consult with relevant social organisations, to take their concerns and perspectives seriously, and to cooperate with them in designing and delivering services.

Councillors' role/responsibilities:

1. Code of Conduct.

There is an established code of conduct, the appendix of which also mentions Sheffield City Council Electronic Communications Policy; Members' ICT Usage Policy; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy Statement 2017

There is also a complaints procedure, and a form to use to make a complaint.

This is welcome, but access to it on the WebPages, and to those policy documents, needs to be improved: as far as we are able to ascertain, they are not posted all together on the SCC website.

2. Expectations of elected councillors

In addition, we would like to see some clarity on the expectation of how councillors communicate with their electorate, and how members of the public can make contact with them. Also, on how councillors are expected to report back to their voters on their activities as councillors, particularly in their role in neighbourhood communication and engagement. Preferably, this should be done annually and certainly before an election in which they are standing.

Transparency:

1. *Information*

There should be access to relevant and timely information available to all councillors; better access too for citizens. There would be significant advantage in improving the council WebPages, which are currently difficult to navigate.

Both advantages and disadvantages to policy proposals should be examined and discussed.

2. *Scrutiny:*

There should be a robust and effective system, to critically appraise decision making and the outcome of decisions. The expectation should be that when a decision is called in, the councillors should be judging the issue on its merits rather than on party loyalty.

There should be involvement of non-councillors via neighbourhood engagement and also through involvement of specialist expertise, including from the voluntary and community sector

Culture:

All the above structural items are needed to strengthen Sheffield's democracy. But an overarching necessity is to change the **culture** of how politics is done in the city.

To rejuvenate local democracy, we need cross party consensus and support. The structures provide a framework within which democracy and politics is enacted. But unless we behave towards each other with respect; unless there is improved esteem for our politicians and leaders (and they demonstrate their respect for the electorate); unless the nature of our political discourse becomes considered and thoughtful and rational instead of point scoring, changes to the structures will, of themselves, achieve little.

This is a serious challenge for the political parties and their leaders, and for us all, in our attitudes, responses and inputs.

But such culture change would have enormous advantages, including encouraging people from all walks of life, and of high calibre, to consider becoming councillors, ensuring that high quality and representative decision making is sustained.



**Overview & Scrutiny Management
Committee
28th November 2019**

Evidence Session B – 1.15-2.15pm

Views of the Voluntary Sector

Written Evidence From:

Maddy Desforges – Chief Executive, Voluntary Action
Sheffield (VAS) - attached

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Decision making structures in Sheffield: Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee call for evidence

As the voluntary and community sector infrastructure organisation in Sheffield, we are aware of the many ways that Council decisions impact on city communities, on VCS organisations, and on the people who make use of our services. We think that decision making has become somewhat opaque and defensive, and are keen to support the development of an approach which engages people effectively, and offers a route to increase agency across the city.

We are assuming that the focus of this review is the making of major, strategic decisions, and not the great many operational decisions the Council makes day in, day out. In fact, we think both matter considerably, as trust and engagement are often built by appropriate involvement in decisions which have greater impact at neighbourhood level. There are a number of good examples of Authorities where a clearer hierarchy of decision making is in place. We would welcome this review covering how decisions which affect people at all levels in the city are made, not just “top level” decisions which fall within a cabinet or committee structure.

We therefore welcome the Councils approach to review decision making, and particularly think it should take into account of the features of good decision, and look to create processes with an appropriate level of subsidiarity, which engage people in the city.

Principles to be applied

We think good decision making needs to be based on a robust set of principles. Those principles need to be developed in consultation with a wide audience. In broad terms we think that decisions made should:

- be based on agreed values and principles. The most important of these is that decisions are made with the interests of those affected as the prime consideration. The Nolan principles are an essential reference point;
- be informed by an overall plan or strategy, so that decisions contribute to achieving an overall vision and associated strategic objectives;
- be clear about why a decision is needed and what specific purpose the decision is aiming to fulfil;
- consider all the options for achieving the stated purpose;
- involve all relevant stakeholders in considering these options. This includes ensuring people in the city have agency on how the city is managed;
- draw upon the available evidence;
- consider the impact (positive and negative) that the decision may have;
- be open, transparent and timely;
- be followed by the provision of good quality information to those interested in the issue under consideration;
- be open to robust scrutiny and therefore challenge, and be followed by robust accountability to all those affected;
- be taken in a timely fashion, maximising opportunities available and avoiding delay.

Issues to be addressed

We see a number of pressing issues to be addressed, ideally through this review as they need to be taken into account in developing decision making structures.

Trust – we know trust is declining, across the country, and in both political system and politicians. Inevitably local politics and the Council are not immune from this. We think that the relationship between the Council and “the people” has become far too remote. People appear to have less confidence in the Council, with some who are suspicious of and hostile to it. There are many reasons for this, most of which are not the fault of the Council, but it results in a disengagement from politics (typified by low levels of voter registration and turn out) and disillusionment in politicians will to make things better. If the Council wants to work towards re-establishing a sense of the Council belonging to the people, so that people will talk of “our Council”, then it must take responsibility for a major programme of democratic renewal. Building trust must be a key component of this review of decision making – both how it is developed, and how the outcomes are implemented offer an opportunity build trust, to demonstrate to people in the city that their voice is heard and has impact.

Strategic plan - We think that the absence of a corporate plan for the Council, or better still a multi-agency partnership plan for the city, makes major decision making more difficult. In the absence of such a plan, decisions cannot be made against the background of a vision and set of priorities and objectives for the city. We think the development of such a plan would be helpful.

Partnership arrangements - We think the processes for including partner organisations, communities and the public in decision making are somewhat inconsistent and at times rather weak.

Openness - We are aware that many if not all major decisions are effectively made behind closed doors in political group meetings, and are then played out in the cabinet and full council. We think this militates against open and transparent decision making.

Short termism - We think that at least some decisions are motivated or influenced by short term political considerations. We think this is driven, at least in part, by the present election cycle of three thirds followed by a fallow year, supporting the case for four yearly “all out” elections to the whole council. We think there is a strong case for the major choices facing the city to be the subject of a multi-party process which seeks to arrive at a strong consensus that can command wide and longer term support. We think this has the potential to lead to much higher quality decisions being made in the interests of the city and its people. We realise that this would be a challenge to traditional party political decision making, but we think it could be a far better reflection of the breadth and balance of opinion across the city.

Propositions – what might the outcome look like?

Without wanting prejudice the wider set of evidence to be heard, we have considered some components of what revised structures might look like. In conversations with our members we have found many people struggle to engage with such an open questions as “how should the Council make decisions”, and find it easier to focus on or react against more specific issues and proposals. To that end we suggest a set of ideas about moving the debate on, and thinking about what might be different.

We are less concerned about the structure of cabinet or committee, and more with developing a culture which involves people and fosters the principles set out above. We are looking for clarity about what decisions are made, at what level, and by whom, with robust scrutiny and checks in place. We realise that the Council has a set of detailed standing orders and hence a scheme of delegation – but find this impenetrable.

We want to see far greater use of deliberative and participative democratic processes to complement the representative process. There have been some notable examples, albeit not from Sheffield, of, for example, citizens assemblies and “co-production” being used to very good effect.

If there is to be a new committee structure, then we think there is a strong case for only a small number of committees, and for these to have thematic roles. For example, economy; environment (including the climate crisis); inclusion and tackling poverty; supporting vulnerable people.

We also think that the City’s various partnership boards – the Sheffield City Partnership, the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Accountable Care Partnership and so on – should be seen as part of the decision making process and structure.

However, we are very concerned that the critical inter-relationships between the roles of different committees may become lost: for example, the relationship between the economy and the climate crisis. We do not think this risk can be mitigated by the meetings of the Full Council itself.

We therefore think that some form of Council wide committee should be a feature of the new structure, and that such a committee should have overall responsibility for the corporate or city plan.

As well as city-wide decision making, we see an urgent need to renew and strengthen neighbourhood and community level decision making. We think the purpose of devolving power and decision making to neighbourhoods and communities needs to be considered carefully. We suggest that devolved powers should be set alongside local processes for engagement and partnership.

We will need to consider what powers and resources can be devolved, to what size of neighbourhoods, with what decision making processes and structures. It will need to be supported by education to support people to take up the responsibility, as well as for children coming through to take their place as “active citizens”. We are keen for this to be more than tokenistic and that it therefore involves more than small budgets.

We need to consider how we will measure success, and know the impact these changes have had in our city over the medium term. That might be aligned to work around the vibrant city index, or another measure to look at the overall health of the city and people’s engagement with its structures.

Final thoughts – things to avoid

We have focussed on a positive, forward looking approach in this evidence. In doing so we would highlight a few things to avoid:

That decision making is focussed on processes, not structures. Decisions need to be taken at the right level by the right people, irrespective of structures in place.

We do not want to retreat to the silo-based decisions that were a hallmark of the previous committee structure.

Any new structure should prevent the loss of corporate, Council wide decisions where they are most appropriate.

Voluntary Action Sheffield
November 2019



Report to Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee 28th November 2019

Report of: Head of Policy & Partnerships

Subject: OSMC Governance Review – Online Call for Evidence

Author of Report: Emily Standbrook-Shaw
Policy & Improvement Officer
emily.standbrook-shaw@sheffield.gov.uk

OSMC Governance Review – Online Call for Evidence

As part of the OSMC's work on governance, an online Call for Evidence was set up to enable groups and individuals to share their evidence with the Committee.

This report sets how the Call for Evidence worked, and feeds back the key themes, messages and issues that people who responded raised.

The full response to the online Call for Evidence is attached as Appendix 1.

The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:

Consider the information provided through the Call for Evidence, and discuss how the Committee may wish to reflect this information in its work on developing principles that should underpin any future decision making structure in Sheffield.

The Committee may wish to pay particular attention to the areas it has previously identified for consideration including: Speed of decision making; Cross party Member involvement; Delegations; Openness, transparency, clarity and visible accountability; Scrutiny and evaluation of decisions; Forward planning of decisions.

Category of Report: OPEN

Report of the Head of Policy and Partnerships **OSMC Governance Review – Call for Evidence**

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee is in the process of considering the Council's governance arrangements and developing principles that should underpin any future decision making system.

There are different elements to this work - Select Committee style hearings, where the Committee will take evidence from a range of people including Council Officers on how decision making currently works in Sheffield, experts in governance and groups with an interest in how Sheffield City Council makes decisions; and visits and conversations with Councils that operate different models of decision-making.

To enhance this work and to provide a mechanism for groups and individuals to provide evidence to the Committee, an online Call for Evidence was set up using the Council's Citizenspace system.

The Call for Evidence ran between the 31st October and the 17th November, and was promoted alongside the Big City Conversation. It was set up to provide a mechanism for people who wanted to provide evidence to the Committee, rather than as a consultation or a representative survey of public opinion. As such, the questions asked are of a qualitative nature rather than designed for quantitative analysis.

The Call for Evidence asked a series of questions of local organisations and individuals:

- a. What does good decision making look like to you?
- b. What is important to you or your organisation about how Sheffield City Council makes decisions?
- c. What do you like about the way Sheffield City Council currently makes decisions?
- d. What don't you like about the way Sheffield City Council currently makes decisions?
- e. What features would you like to see in any new decision making structure in Sheffield?
- f. Is there anything to avoid in any new decision making structure in Sheffield?
- g. Would you like to add any further information regarding Sheffield City Council's decision making processes?

There were a separate set of questions for national organisations with expertise in local governance:

- a. What are the key features of good decision making? What can we learn from best practice?
- b. What are the relative strengths and weaknesses of the Leader and Cabinet model and a Committee System?

- c. Are there any reports or other documents that you think we should particularly consider?

The call for evidence also invited people to get in touch if they wanted to present their evidence to the Committee in person, which some people will be doing at the Committee's meeting on the 28th November 2019.

2. Response to the Online Call for Evidence

- 2.1 We received a much higher than anticipated response to the Call for Evidence – 691 responses in total. The vast majority of these were from individuals – 677. This process was set up as a call for *evidence*, however the majority of the responses received from individuals have been in the spirit of a consultation or a survey – so much of the information gathered through this process is a reflection of the opinions of the people who chose to respond. We committed to publishing all of the responses received, and have done this at Appendix 1, however where opinion has been expressed in an inflammatory or offensive way, comments have been redacted. An analysis of the key themes emerging from individuals' responses is detailed in section 3 below to assist the Committee in their consideration of the responses.
- 2.2 Of the responses we received to the online Call for Evidence, 3 completed the section for national organisations with expertise in governance. Closer analysis showed that of these, only one, from the Centre for Welfare Reform, was submitted on behalf of an organisation and so we have categorised the others alongside individuals. The response from the Centre for Welfare Reform is set out in section 4 of the report. Other national organisations with expertise in governance that have provided the Committee with written evidence have chosen not to use the Citizenspace Online Call for Evidence. They have/are attending meetings of Committee to present their evidence, and their written submissions can be found on the Council's website [here](#) (see Item 6).
- 2.3 22 respondents said they were from a local organisation. In 13 of these responses it was clear that the response was on behalf of a named organisation. Where no organisation name was given, or the response did not appear to be on behalf of an organisation, responses have been included as individuals. An analysis of the key themes raised by local organisations is set out in section 5, and their full responses are included in the spreadsheet at Appendix 1.

3 Analysis of responses from individuals

An analysis of the key themes emerging from each question is detailed below to assist the Committee in their consideration of the responses.

3.1 What does good decision making look like to you?

- 3.1.1 This question received a broad range of responses, across a range of themes. Key areas involved transparency, democratic decision making and accountability; with many of the comments relating to the scrutiny process and ways in which decisions should be able to be challenged or questioned by the public.
- 3.1.2 The themes which came across strongly were the need for decisions to be made after robust consultation, including a strong evidence base, and for decisions to be made by equal representation from all councillors. Many responses indicated that when residents elect a councillor they expect them to be able to make decisions in the interest of their area and not for it to be the decision of only a select number of councillors.
- 3.1.3 Some responses also discussed the importance of timeliness when making decisions; some in terms of making decisions quickly, whereas others said it should take the length of time needed.
- 3.1.4 The need for thorough communication was expressed in many responses and the need for people to understand the system of decision making in place. Some people felt they could not comment on what good decision making would look like as they do not currently understand the process.

3.2 What is important to you or your organisation about the way Sheffield City Council makes decisions?

- 3.2.1 Many respondents expressed concern about the concentration of decision making power in a small number of elected Councillors, and felt that there should be a meaningful role for all Councillors in the decision making process. Some respondents would like to see a more consensual approach to decision making, and more cross-party working.
- 3.2.2 Respondents also consistently suggested that decision making should be open and transparent; that decision makers should be accountable; and that there should be clarity and communication about what decisions are being made, who is making them, the rationale behind decisions, and mechanisms for holding decision makers to account.
- 3.2.3 Respondents felt that decision making should be informed by thorough and timely public involvement and consultation, listening to a range of voices – especially those affected by a proposal. There were also many comments about the importance of decision making being evidence based, and the benefits of bringing external expertise into decision making.
- 3.2.4 Respondents felt that decision making should be fair, putting the needs of the whole city before party politics or commercial interests, and taking

a long term view. Some respondents felt that the system needs to help build trust between decision makers and the public.

- 3.2.5 Other comments included the need for the decision making system to deliver 'good' decisions; encourage innovation; to deliver good, value for money public services; to be able to respond to climate and environmental issues and tackle inequality.

3.3 What do you like about the way in which Sheffield City Council makes decisions at the moment?

3.3.1 This question was specifically focused on identifying the positives about the current model of decision making in Sheffield but only around one in ten were positive. There was some appreciation for the existing channels for public involvement, including webcasting, public meetings and social media. Some respondents also expressed a liking for the council's principles and ethos, such as a commitment to fairness and consultation, and mitigating the effects of austerity.

3.3.2 However, by far the most common response to this question was a simple "nothing" or "not a lot". Many went on to give reasons for disliking it, though a substantial number indicated that they didn't know enough about how decisions are made at the moment.

3.3.3 Of those who gave reasons for disliking the current model, the themes were reflective of the responses to other questions, with the main objections being that the decision-making process is opaque and that power is undemocratically concentrated into the hands of a few people.

3.3.4 Other points include that, with the webcasting of meetings, it would be beneficial for members of the public to have a way to ask questions and interact remotely. A few respondents mentioned that they were unimpressed with the conduct of councillors at public meetings. One specific idea was that leadership positions should have a fixed term of office.

3.4 What don't you like about the way in which Sheffield City Council makes decisions at the moment?

3.4.1 Key areas cited by respondents involved transparency, equal involvement in decision making of all Councillors, and accountability; with many of the comments relating to party political agendas and not delivering the best outcomes for the city.

3.4.2 In answering this question many responses highlighted expectations for a councillor to be able to represent them in their area and the model of

governance preventing this. Many disliked the concentration of power amongst a select group of members, stating it is a lack of equal representation.

- 3.4.3 Some responses highlighted concerns about consultations not being open enough or promoted in a way to reach the whole community.
- 3.4.4 Some responses also mentioned the importance of considering community opinion when making decisions and how the community assembly model was removed but nothing which has replaced them has been as successful.
- 3.4.5 Many responses mentioned defensive attitudes when having dealings with the Council and the need for a more open attitude to public participation and evidence based decision making. However, officer involvement in decisions was mentioned as an area which should occur less.

3.5 What features would you like to see in any new decision making structure in Sheffield?

- 3.5.1 There is a distinct theme running throughout the responses to this question, with many respondents advocating either the return to, or the implementation of a committee system. It is clear that there is significant concern about the concentration of decision making power in a small number of individuals, and party tribalism, with many respondents echoing the need for all Councillors to have full voting rights.
- 3.5.2 In addition there is a clear desire for greater openness and transparency across the decision making process, with strengthened public involvement and the ability to call upon subject matter experts where appropriate – whether this is from within the public, private or voluntary sector.
- 3.5.3 The appetite for change and to move away from the current strong Leader/Cabinet model is apparent in the majority of responses, with a common call to for Sheffield to “move into the future” and to adopt the Nolan principles / the recommendations set out in the ‘It’s Our City’ campaign.

3.6 Is there anything to avoid in any new decision-making structure in Sheffield?

- 3.6.1 The most common response to this question was that the current model, or a model which concentrates power in the hands of a small number of decision makers or doesn’t allow for all Councillors to be involved in decision making should be avoided in any new structure. Tribal and party politics was seen by many respondents as something to be avoided.

- 3.6.2 Many respondents felt that secrecy should be avoided in any new structure, and stressed the importance of transparency. There was a strong feeling that decision making should be open and accountable, and not take place behind closed doors.
- 3.6.3 The importance of consultation being meaningful, not designed to achieve a specific outcome and listening to a range of views – not just those that shout the loudest - was highlighted by some respondents.
- 3.6.4 Some respondents felt that an overly bureaucratic or complicated system should be avoided, and should facilitate efficient and evidence based decision making, without delegating too many decisions to unelected officers.
- 3.6.5 Of a move to a committee system, respondents suggested mechanisms such as Chairs being selected from all parties, to prevent replicating a system where power is concentrated in a small number of decision makers. It was also suggested that any committee system needs to have a mechanism for urgent decision making.
- 3.6.6 A wide range of other issues were highlighted. Some respondents wanted to see that any new structure has high ethical standards, to avoid cronyism, corruption and bullying; additional costs should be avoided; there should be adequate training and support for Councillors in the new system.

3.7 Would you like to add any further information regarding Sheffield City Council's decision making processes?

- 3.7.1 This question attracted a wide range of responses, covering territory such as service delivery, procurement decisions, approaches to engagement, budget cuts and austerity, as well as the immediate issue of governance arrangements and associated issues.
- 3.7.2 There was a strong emphasis on inclusivity and public involvement, with a large number of responses focused on how the Council should listen to residents of the city better and a number focusing on ensuring an equal role for all Councillors in decision making. There was also a focus on openness and transparency, accountability and strong democratic systems, and on the view that there is a need to have decision making arrangements that allow the Council to look forwards and plan for the future.
- 3.7.3 A number of respondents expressed the view that change to decision making processes and structures is essential, with a number suggesting that the Council should work to avoid the need for a referendum. Both

implicitly and explicitly, a large number of respondents touched on issues of trust.

4 Response from national experts with expertise in governance: Centre for Welfare Reform

The following presents the response submitted by the Centre for Welfare Reform to the Call for Evidence.

4.1 What are the key features of good decision making? What can we learn from best practice?

“Good decision-making has 3 components:

1. Made at the right level - decisions that are too centralised will be unable to appreciate the value of views, resources and opportunities that can only be seen at the local level. However some decisions can only be made at a higher level.

2. Considered - decisions that are not capable of challenge, debate and discussion will tend to be incompetent and will squeeze out important and creative alternatives. Sometimes ‘executive decisions’ are required to react quickly - but such executive decision-making must be limited.

3. Democratic - everyone (within the scope) of the decision must be able to influence it. Ideally decisions are made by consensus - failing this by majority. However rights also give individuals or others a veto over decisions that may impact them too violently.

Broadly - good governance is about creating a balanced framework which protects human rights, social justice, peace and the natural world. Such a framework is called a constitution - and ideally this will be clear and transparent.”

4.2 What are the relative strengths and weaknesses of operating a Leader and Cabinet model and a committee system?

“In our view the current leadership system is not fit for Sheffield. A city of half a million brilliant citizens needs to build citizenship capacity and community and to create a world where everyone can thrive. The strong leader fails this test, because it centralises decisions, minimises considered debate and is barely democratic. A committee system is possibly a next step to something better, but really Sheffield is the kind of wonderful place that needs to raise its sites beyond both these options.”

4.3 Are there any reports or other documents that you think we should particularly consider?

“Heading Upstream describes the work of Barnsley Council to begin a different approach to local democracy and to my knowledge is the best

model to build from. We could go much further than Barnsley, but we should start by collaborating with them and learning from them.”

4.4 Would you like to add any further information regarding Sheffield City Council's decision making processes?

“There is nothing to my knowledge which stops the Council from developing a new Constitution for the City. We have much more freedom than we think. Even where there may be certain statutory restrictions we can use existing legislation to design innovative solutions - or we can use civil society structures - which are not bound by the same statutory restrictions. Sheffield - with its strong Labour and Green base - is an ideal place to be a world leader in democratic city governance.”

5 Analysis of responses from local organisations

The below provides an overview of the key themes and issues/challenges identified in the responses received from local organisations. 13 such responses were received, where it was clearly identifiable that the response was on behalf of an organisation as a whole. There are many similarities between the issues raised by local organisations and those raised by individuals.

5.1 What does good decision making look like to you?

As perhaps to be expected, there are clear and reoccurring themes emerging from across the responses to this question. Many feel that good decision making is grounded in transparency with reasoned input from all stakeholders - whether this is all local councillors, local grass root organisations, local experts etc.

In addition many respondents outlined that good decision making is based on facts, evidence (especially taking into account evidence from those individuals/groups that the decision will impact upon) and ability to evaluate and communicate decisions in a clear, consistent and fair manner.

5.2 What is important to you or your organisation about the way Sheffield City Council makes decisions?

The response to this question can largely characterised by concerns re the concentration of “power” into the hands off a limited number of people. There is a distinct recurring theme that the most important thing is that decisions should involve as wide a group of elected councillors as possible, but also listening to what citizens want and need – palpable sense that people feel a wide gulf between them and the Cabinet. There is a feeling of their voice and views not counting, and in my view has led to many wards have low voter participation.

Many cite that major decisions taken over recent years have been flawed, with a lack of evidence and clarity as to why the final decision was reached.

The following quote taken from the call for evidence illustrates the themes running throughout the responses to this question - “openness, honesty, transparency, listening, acting for the greater good of the city rather than political ends, be progressive, innovative and imaginative and get away from cosy closed-shop decision making”.

5.3 What do you like about the way in which Sheffield City Council makes decisions at the moment?

The use of technology to open up council meetings e.g. webcasting of overview and scrutiny committees and consultation hosted on the council website , have been cited as an important step in progressing towards further transparency, however the majority of responses to this question are overwhelmingly negative. Many feel that there is a legacy of historic decision making that continues to have an adverse impact on decisions now.

Overall however, many respondents expressed concern that decisions taken were too political and not democratic as too few people involved making decisions, with many feeling that citizens are omitted from the decision making process, resulting in a lack of transparency and accountability.

5.4 What don't you like about the way in which Sheffield City Council makes decisions at the moment?

Many respondents feel that the decision making process within the council is not transparent and that it often feels like there is no underlying strategy behind it. Genuine decision making -power is viewed as being concentrated between a few people, with party politics identified as hindrance to progress in the city.

There is a real sense that decision making in its current form is undemocratic, nor are decisions taken in a fair and open manner and poorly communicated with an overall lack of engagement with local councillors and communities. Scrutiny meetings in particular are identified as being as overly prescriptive and are seen as a means to rubber stamp meetings rather than inviting/listening to challenges and concerns.

5.5 What features would you like to see in any new decision making structure in Sheffield?

As perhaps is to be expected, this question in particular attracted detailed responses and proposals with the focus being largely on a wish to see a greater number of councillors involved in the decision making process, greater consultation with affected parties, citizen engagement and participation – ranging from citizens sitting on scrutiny committees to citizen assemblies to community constitutions and an overall need to rebuild trust between the council and Sheffield’s residents.

There is also a strong desire to see increased cross party decisions and consultation and an end to party politics within the council and an expressed need that committees must consult with community representatives as a matter of course and should establish early on a routine for doing so, which may include co-option.

There is a call for streamlined access to information about meetings - digestible, transparent and accessible to all. Committee decisions must be communicated in a way that is both clear, transparent and useful with clear lines of accountability.

5.6 Is there anything to avoid in any new decision-making structure in Sheffield?

The responses received to this question largely mirrored the themes identified above. However there is a distinct ‘tension’ between those that express a desire for greater consultation and citizen engagement and those that believe that there is too much public consultation and questions as how representative these actually are of the general public’s views – a call for more effective consultation to inform decision making.

There are numerous concerns expressed regarding the consolidation of power/decision making being limited to a small number of individuals and a call for an end to self/party interest over the needs of the city.

Any potential committee system must not replicate the cabinet system by allowing committee chairs or others to dominate – there is a real need for cross party representation.

What is also obvious from the responses is that respondents are realistic in their outlook and recognise that any potential new model/system of governance will not be perfect immediately and the Council should have patience and keep plugging away at making the changes to a new way of working – whilst keeping everyone informed as to what's happening.

5.7 Would you like to add any further information regarding Sheffield City Council’s decision making processes?

Again, the responses here largely reiterate those discussed above - changes to the decision making process are very important and must be

supported by the wider community and transparent in order to be sustainable and effective.

Suggestion that it would be of no use attempting to establish any change in governance using traditional ways of working – rather it should be the first thing designed by a new citizens assembly in collaboration with councillors and involving others from other locations e.g. councils, advocacy groups etc.

6 The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:

Consider the information provided through the Call for Evidence, and discuss how the Committee may wish to reflect this information in its work on developing principles that should underpin any future decision making structure in Sheffield.

The Committee may wish to pay particular attention to the areas it has previously identified for consideration including: Speed of decision making; Cross party Member involvement; Delegations; Openness, transparency, clarity and visible accountability; Scrutiny and evaluation of decisions; Forward planning of decisions.



**Overview & Scrutiny Management
Committee
28th November 2019**

Evidence Session D – 4.30pm-5.30pm

Views of the Young People

Written Evidence From:

Sheffield Youth Cabinet and Youth Advisers
Emma Hinchcliffe, Sheffield Futures

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Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee 28th November 2019

Evidence Session E – 6pm-8pm

Groups and Individuals who have requested to give evidence in person

Written Evidence From:

Dr Karen Ford, via online Call for Evidence

What does good decision making look like to you?

Decisions reached through discussion and consensus among ALL elected councillors in consultation with the community and in light of information provided by independent experts on the issues

What is important to you or your organisation about the way Sheffield City Council makes decisions?

All elected councillors must have a proper role in decision making to ensure fair and meaningful representation of us citizens. As it stands key decisions are made by a very small number of councillors who are heavily influenced unelected officials who do not follow the Council's own policy. This has put aspects of our lives in the hands of people interested in profits and not citizens especially with regard to the planning and development of our city's housing provision and the maintenance of the city e.g the PFI contract that led to the destruction of healthy trees and the spending of council money on attempts to prosecute and imprison protestors unlawfully.

What do you like about the way in which Sheffield City Council makes decisions at the moment?

Nothing. Decisions are in the hands of a few for the benefit of the few not the community.

What don't you like about the way in which Sheffield City Council makes decisions at the moment?

See previous comments and:

Zero accountability for the decisions taken by the current decision makers – as a citizen I feel like I am living under a local dictatorship

Lack of fairness and transparency e.g the PFI contract which should never have been awarded and wouldn't have been if all councillors and community had seen the terms of it.

The influence of unelected officials

The current control by 10 councillors

Party politics being a driving factor in decisions instead of the needs of the community

Public attendance at committee meetings is just window dressing and a mechanism to pretend that community views are taken into account. I speak from personal experience after presenting evidence at one which showed the assumptions made in a planning document were false and flawed and I was simply ignored – no response was given by the Committee members to explain why there were claims in the report were false.

What features would you like to see in any new decision making structure in Sheffield?

Fair and meaningful representation

Increased participation and impact

Cultural change hand in hand with new system structure and processes

Setting clear standards and improvements and accountability for make them

You can find a list of the features I expect for each at the following website. The research has been done for you and I suggest you take it on board.

<https://www.itsoursheffield.co.uk/some-principles-for-a-modern-committee-system-briefing/>

Is there anything to avoid in any new decision making structure in Sheffield?

The status quo which is unethical and immoral. The decision making must not be on party political lines and must be made in a way that ensures all of the councillors elected actually collectively make decisions in a fair and transparent and ethical manner for the benefit of all sheffield's citizens.

Would you like to add any further information regarding Sheffield City Council's decision making processes?

The current system needs radical reform.

I am frankly disgusted to learn that reforms of the kind needed and I am suggesting can be made without the council wasting money on a referendum.

The number of signatures obtained through the petition makes it clear the people of Sheffield want change and all previous referendums of this nature in other regions have resulted in a vote for reform. Furthermore, I would be very surprised if the people of Sheffield voted against the democracy that reform will bring.

The current leadership needs to admit that mistakes have been made and that change is essential and to do the ethical thing and use the resources available to develop and implement reform proposals.

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Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee 28th November 2019

Evidence Session E – 6pm-8pm

Groups and Individuals who have requested to give evidence in person

Written Evidence From:

Kevin Poppelwell, via online Call for Evidence

What does good decision making look like to you?

Decisions are undertaken based on all available information. All elected councillors get to have a say and vote on all issues affecting the community in Sheffield.

What is important to you or your organisation about the way Sheffield City Council makes decisions?

The removal of the current leader system and its replacement with a more democratic, modern committee system, with immediate effect.

What do you like about the way in which Sheffield City Council makes decisions at the moment?

Nothing. The current system is terrible, it is undemocratic, and does not represent the views of the council as a whole or the people of Sheffield.

What don't you like about the way in which Sheffield City Council makes decisions at the moment?

Nothing. The current system is terrible, it is undemocratic, and does not represent the views of the council as a whole or the people of Sheffield.

What features would you like to see in any new decision making structure in Sheffield?

The need to shift to a more democratic modern committee system. This has been very successful in other cities where the system has been implemented.

Is there anything to avoid in any new decision making structure in Sheffield?

Anything like the current system, power being in the hands of a small number of people.

Would you like to add any further information regarding Sheffield City Council's decision making processes?

The amount of money wasted under the current system is criminal, ie money spent trying to prosecute the tree protestors.
The current 10 leader system councillors should be accountable for their actions.



Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee 28th November 2019

Evidence Session E – 6pm-8pm

Groups and Individuals who have requested to give evidence in person

Written Evidence From:

Robin Hughes for Joined Up Heritage Sheffield via online Call for Evidence – attached.

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Response ID ANON-19FT-GMSK-P

Submitted to **Call for Evidence - Governance Review 2019**

Submitted on **2019-11-13 08:17:59**

Introduction

1 What is your name?

Name:

Robin Hughes

2 What is your organisation? (If applicable)

Organisation:

Hallamshire Historic Buildings

You or Your Organisation

3 Which of the following applies to you? Please select one statement.

A local organisation

Sheffield City Council - Decision Making

4 What does good decision making look like to you?

Please write comments below:

Good decision making puts the needs and concerns of people first, and seeks their understanding and support. Decisions are made on the basis of facts, and focus on what can and will be done, and why. It does not follow a party political agenda or the whims or prejudices of Councillors or officers.

5 What is important to you or your organisation about the way Sheffield City Council makes decisions?

Please write comments below:

As heritage campaigners, it is important to us to know what decisions are being considered that affect heritage before those decisions are made, and when it is still possible to provide input to them. We also want to have a realistic chance of affecting decisions on the historic environment. Regardless of the outcome, we need to know what decision was made, all the reasons for which it was made, and for it to be clear that it was determined by the interests of the people of the city. It is particularly important that decision makers show their awareness of the law and policy on heritage protection and that they consider alternatives, as required by these.

6 What do you like about the way in which Sheffield City Council makes decisions at the moment?

Please write comments below:

We are often critical of decisions that affect the historic environment and how these are made. There are few examples of good practice, but one notable exception is the ongoing discussion with heritage organisations about the next phases of Heart of the City II. By providing the opportunity for conversations about the scheme and listening to the outcome of historical research, it has been possible to design a scheme that works with and celebrates heritage, without compromising viability. This is new. Normally the first opportunity to provide input is during the application process, when the Council's approach has already been finalised and consultants have been brought in to ensure it gets through the application process unchanged. The more open and inclusive approach will result in a more successful scheme, compared with the adversarial "take-it-or-leave-it" attitude so often seen in the past, and should be a benchmark for all decisions.

Sheffield City Council - Decision Making continued

7 What don't you like about the way in which Sheffield City Council makes decisions at the moment?

Please write comments below:

There is far too much politics in decision making. The fate of heritage can depend on the personal prejudice of a single individual. Alternative proposals, whether from campaigners or from other parties, are seen as hostile and result in defensiveness or dismissal. Decisions taken by individuals are frequently made by people who lack the skills and knowledge required, and do not feel under any obligation to consult. Cabinet portfolios are reshuffled often enough to ensure that it is difficult for any individual member to gain the experience required, and sometimes a portfolio may be reassigned between members with diametrically opposed views.

In the last year, heritage - still not formally acknowledged as part of any cabinet or senior officer portfolio - has been particularly badly affected by instability and poor decision-making. A change in cabinet meant that a Councillor keen to pursue the advantage of heritage was replaced by an enthusiast for unfettered development. That individual cancelled the public consultation on the Castlegate Conservation Area at short notice, breaking a repeated Council commitment to create such an area, apparently without consulting cabinet or officers. When this was challenged, a review was announced of all the city's Conservation Areas with the implied intention that some would be cancelled, again apparently without discussion - in fact, the Council leader subsequently denied the existence of such a review. The loss of one particular heritage asset is already likely to result from the first decision, with a significant risk of others to follow. Had the second decision been carried through, the potential for significant damage to the historic environment would have led to widespread public concern and harm to the city's

reputation nationally. Inward investment based on the distinctive character of the city would have been deterred, and the proven economic and well-being benefits of the historic environment would have been lost. A single individual should not be in a position to take such a risk, let alone change the Council's stance on an issue overnight.

Also very troubling are the proposed cuts to the planning department, which could see the loss of many specialists, including conservation officers and the urban design team. The Council is pursuing an agenda of less expertise, less knowledge and less scrutiny, which will lead to even poorer decision making - the exact opposite of what they should be trying to achieve. Heritage has been identified by the It's Our City! campaign as a huge issue for local people in areas across the city. It is certainly an area where local people find decision-making to be lacking.

As individual members outside the cabinet do not participate in many decisions, they do not inform themselves or build relevant skills. Some decisions are taken by committees, for example the Planning committee, but even here decisions are taken without much understanding, based on the officer's recommendation, which will have been presented at length, only a few minutes being allowed for any contrary view. On the rare occasions when the committee disagrees with the recommendation, they often lack the knowledge to understand what options they have to change it. Unfortunately, some controversial decisions divide the committee along party lines, even though decisions are supposed to be strictly non-political.

8 What features would you like to see in any new decision making structure in Sheffield?

Please write comments below:

Committees must consult with community representatives as a matter of course and should establish early on a routine for doing so, which may include co-option. For matters of heritage, which can be relevant to many different portfolios, there are several organisations whose members have not only historical knowledge but understanding of matters such as planning and economics, and these should be made use of. The Council also has a ready source of expertise in the Conservation Advisory Group, a very good example of highly motivated local people, many of them professionals, offering their services at no charge to help the Council to make good decisions.

There should be a Heritage Committee, charged with seeking opportunities for harnessing the economic and social power of the historic environment, and with ensuring that all Council decisions not only make the most of these but are consistent with statutory and policy requirements to preserve or enhance heritage assets.

It is essential that community representatives are able to build relationships with committees. This means that changes to committee membership should be kept to a minimum. Some change is needed to bring in new thinking, but members will need time to build familiarity and long service will help continuity.

As many Councillors as possible should be members of at least one committee, and should be expected to acquire and maintain relevant knowledge. The Council must ensure that they provide training to members to make this possible.

Inter-committee communication is absolutely vital, to ensure that decisions are not made in silos. Agenda must be visible to all committees, and awareness maintained of where business may be relevant to more than one committee. Joint sub-committees or inviting representatives from other committees to attend can help with this.

Committee decisions must be communicated in a way that is both clear and useful. Ordinary members of the public do not have the time required to examine multiple minutes, so should have access to a short statement covering all decisions. The input and influence of the community should be explicitly acknowledged and welcomed, to build confidence and trust that the wishes of the community are being respected.

9 Is there anything to avoid in any new decision-making structure in Sheffield?

Please write comments below:

The committee system must not replicate the cabinet system by allowing committee chairs or others to dominate. Committees need to appoint multiple chairs, from all parties. This also applies across committees: the same people should not turn up on multiple committees or be able to spread their influence too widely. Committee size needs to be limited to ensure that members are there because of their interest and motivation. This will improve efficiency.

The appointment process needs to avoid selecting members on the basis of their political allegiance.

Additional Information

Would you like to add any further information regarding Sheffield City Council's decision making processes?

Please write comments below:



Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee 28th November 2019

Evidence Session E – 6pm-8pm

Groups and Individuals who have requested to give evidence in person

Written Evidence From:

Cllr Douglas Johnson for Sheffield Green Party

Sheffield Green Party response to Governance Review

This is Sheffield Green Party's initial response to the Call for Evidence in the Governance Review 2019.

We would be pleased to give further oral evidence in support of these written submissions.

The new system should be based on two overall aims:

- Improving the wellbeing of everyone in the city, including tackling inequalities; and
- Trying to ensure that the new system encourages and enables all citizens to influence decision-making affecting their lives.

We believe it is wrong in principle, where the people of Sheffield elect 84 councillors, to allow just one of those councillors to be able to make all the decisions. This creates unfairness and inequality.

A committee system should be based on the following principles:

1. Every elected councillor should be involved in decision-making on at least one committee
2. Committees for various policy areas should make decisions and will be provided with officer reports to inform them (as happens at present)

3. Committees may have sub-committees to further delegate decisions
4. Committee chairs should be appointed on a cross-party proportional basis
5. The most important decisions should be reserved for full council
6. Council should agree which decisions are delegated to committees, sub-committees, and different levels of officers. In principle, the level of delegation should match the importance of the decision.
7. There should be a written scheme of delegation (very similar to the present Leader's Scheme of Delegation).
8. Operational decisions should generally be delegated to officers
9. Where decisions are delegated, there must be a process for councillors to challenge decisions and bring them to a higher level committee or full council; provided there are checks to make sure that minor decisions don't clog up the system. This could require a minimum number of councillors to request a review of a decision and / or the approval of the committee it was brought to before it was discussed fully.
10. There should be delegation for urgent decision-making, possibly to chairs of committees. However, urgent decision-making should be confined to the minimum extent necessary and with additional safeguards to report back fully to the normal decision-maker.
11. Public engagement should be fostered as much as possible, through an accessible website, meaningful consultations and an improvement in the quality of written officers' reports.
12. Critically, elected councillors should be encouraged to find out about problems in their areas, feed them into the council, be listened to and be able to influence policy decisions based on knowledge.

Cllr Douglas Johnson
Sheffield Green Party
17 November 2019