Governance Committee

Wednesday 8 December 2021 at 4.30 pm

Town Hall, Sheffield, S1 2HH

The Press and Public are Welcome to Attend

Membership

Councillor Julie Grocutt
Councillor Penny Baker
Councillor Sue Alston
Councillor Dawn Dale
Councillor Peter Garbutt
Councillor Christine Gilligan
Councillor Mark Jones
Councillor Mary Lea
Councillor Mike Levery
Councillor Mohammed Mahroof
Councillor Sioned-Mair Richards

Sheffield
City Council

PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE MEETING

The Governance Committee is leading on work to transition to a committee system of governance from May 2022. It is a politically proportionate Committee which will be tasked with oversight of the transitional work and will approve the recommendations to be made to Full Council.

The Committee will be outward facing. The Council will not be working in isolation on this project but will seek input from outside the organisation, ensuring citizens are engaged and are provided with opportunities to help shape this programme of work The Council will also be engaging the professional support of agencies such as the Local Government Association, the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny and Monitoring Officers from other local authorities which have recently transitioned or are about to transition to a Committee system. This will ensure the Council is supported through this period and learns from best practice to ensure that the system implemented in Sheffield responds to the needs of our City.

A copy of the agenda and reports is available on the Council's website at www.sheffield.gov.uk . 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 Governance 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.

PLEASE NOTE: Meetings of the Governance Committee have to be held as physical meetings. If you would like to attend the meeting, you must register to attend by emailing committee@sheffield.gov.uk at least 2 clear days in advance of the date of the meeting. This is necessary to facilitate the management of attendance at the meeting to maintain social distancing. In order to ensure safe access and to protect all attendees, you will be asked to wear a face covering (unless you have an exemption) at all times when moving about within the venue.

It is also recommended that you undertake a Covid-19 Rapid Lateral Flow Test within two days of the meeting. You can order tests online to be delivered to your home address, or you can collect tests from a local pharmacy. Further details of these tests and how to obtain them can be accessed here - Order coronavirus (COVID-19) rapid lateral flow tests - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk). We are unable to guarantee entrance to observers, as priority will be given to registered speakers. Alternatively, you can observe the meeting remotely by clicking on the 'view the webcast' link provided on the meeting page of the website.

If you require any further information please contact Jay Bell email jay.bell@sheffield.gov.uk.

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE AGENDA
8 DECEMBER 2021

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. **Transition to a Committee System Inquiry Session 3**

7. **Co-Chair Pilot Report**
Report to follow.

8. **Transitional Committees Lessons Learnt**
Report to follow.

9. **Date of Next Meeting**
The next meeting of the Committee will be held on 22 December 2021.

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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 <u>not</u>:

- 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.

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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 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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Governance Committee
8th December 2021

Transition to a Committee System Inquiry Session 3
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Officer Contact: Alexander Polak, Assistant Director (Governance)
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As part of the Committee's work looking at Governance, two evidence gathering sessions have been set up to enable the Committee to hear from a range of witnesses.

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

D   4.40pm – 5.40pm – Local Organisations with an interest in Governance and Decision Making
Witnesses
1.   4.40-5.00pm – Ruth Hubberd - It's Our City
2.   5.00– 5.20pm– Vicky Seddon, Co-ordinator, Sheffield 4 Democracy.
3.   5.20-5.40pm – Nigel Slack – Active Citizen

5.40 - 6.00pm – Co-Chair Pilot Report

6.00 - 6.10pm – Time to reflect

6.10 - 6.30pm – Transitional Committee Lessons Learnt Report

E   6.30 – 6.50pm – National Experts in Local Governance and Decision Making
Witnesses
1.   John Cade, INGOLOV

F   6.50 - 7.10pm – Academic
Witnesses
1.   Matthew Wood, Senior Lecturer, The Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Sheffield

G   7.10 – 7.30pm – Local Government
Witnesses
1.   Kate Josephs, Chief Executive, Sheffield City Council

7.30 - 7.50pm – Time to reflect

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Written Evidence From:

Robin Hughes, JUHS

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Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 Sheffield has a wide and diverse heritage. Joined Up Heritage Sheffield seeks to bring together organisations and individuals interested in heritage, in all its variety, to promote better understanding, a strategic approach and a better-resourced and better-connected presentation of heritage. JUHS has published a Heritage Strategy (see https://www.joinedupheritagesheffield.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Heritage-Strategy-2021-31.pdf) that establishes a vision for Sheffield's heritage. This has the support of Sheffield City Council.

1.2 JUHS seeks to ensure that Council governance enables heritage to make the fullest possible economic, social and environmental contributions that the city urgently needs, especially as it recovers from the shock of the COVID pandemic and tackles the climate emergency.

1.3 JUHS very much appreciates both the willingness of the Council to engage with us regarding the role of heritage in the city, and this opportunity to provide evidence to the Committee System Inquiry.

2. Requirements of a governance system

2.1 In the opinion of JUHS, the following principles are vital to a committee system that puts the needs and concerns of people first, and seeks their understanding and support. Some are specific to heritage, but all could be applied to any matter.

2.2 Heritage should be seen as having broad relevance. Its value and vulnerability should inform the agenda of all committees, and should be laid out in an overarching strategy. By avoiding any risk of a silo approach, more opportunities open up.

2.3 Lines of responsibility for heritage, and the strategic role that it serves, must be clearly articulated. Structures to achieve this are suggested below.

2.4 Stakeholders need to know in advance of decisions which affect heritage or to which heritage makes (or could make) a contribution, when it is still possible to provide input. They should then have a realistic chance of affecting such decisions.

2.5 Members and their supporting officers need to be open to the great range of knowledge and skills of local people outside the Council, including campaigners, who generally ensure that they are very well-informed. There needs to be an expectation or even obligation that committees will seek out advice from this source. The dangers of an out-of-date attitude of defensiveness can thereby be avoided.

2.6 In particular, committees should take advantage of the ability to co-opt members from outside the Council, either as non-voting advisors or as full voting members where appropriate.

2.7 A different skill-set is required of committee chairs compared with cabinet members. Consensus building and collaboration will be prized. Committee chairs have a leadership role, but they are not sole actors, and remain first among equals.

2.8   It is also important that members remain keenly aware that party politics is always subsidiary to the needs and concerns of the people of Sheffield. Their default approach must be collaboration at all times. Anything less will unavoidably reduce public trust and confidence.

2.9   A committee system requires all members to have skills and understanding relevant to their responsibilities. Members are often well-informed and highly-motivated, especially on particular topics of concern, but in the future all members will need a high level of understanding across a wide range of topics. This will need to be fostered and developed quickly.

2.10   Stable membership of committees and consistency in committee chairs will be crucial to establishing and maintaining community relationships based on trust and understanding. Clear expectations should be set for an appropriate duration of tenure, with a defined process for handover when changes do take place.

2.11   As many Councillors as possible should be members of at least one committee, and should be expected to acquire and maintain relevant knowledge. This will help to build public trust in the effectiveness of members, create a more even division of labour, limit the influence of individuals, and contribute to members' personal growth. The Council must ensure that training is provided to members to make this possible.

2.12   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.

2.13   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.

2.14   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. This could also provide a model for other areas, as a means of supplementing scarce Council resource.

3. Structures for a strategic approach to heritage

3.1   Heritage has often been misunderstood as having a limited role confined to the visitor economy, or providing ornament or interest that is worth preserving for its own sake where other priorities allow.

3.2   In fact, heritage is at the very heart of identity and community, provides the distinctiveness that is indispensable for economic success, has proven benefits to health and well-being, is a vital expression of our diversity, is a valuable educational resource, and underpins the city's pride and self-worth. It must have a central role in policy and decision making, reflected by clearly-defined responsibilities in governance.

3.3   Unfortunately, there has been no clear responsibility for heritage. Publicly-available descriptions of cabinet and senior officer portfolios have not referred to it directly, nor does the important role of Heritage Champion appear on the Council's website. This must change under the new governance arrangements.

3.4   Possible approaches to governance include:

3.4.1   <u>Heritage Committee</u>: charged with seeking opportunities for harnessing the economic, social and environmental power of the historic environment, liaising with other committees, and ensuring that all Council decisions make the most of these and are consistent with statutory and policy requirements to preserve or enhance heritage assets.

3.4.2 <u>Heritage Advocates</u>: each committee to have one member who is responsible for ensuring proper representation and consideration of the benefits of heritage to the business of the committee and the potential impact of its decisions.

3.4.3 <u>Heritage Tribunes</u>: one or more elected members entitled to attend any committee, and pro-actively invited to advise on or advocate the role of or impact to heritage.

3.4.4 <u>Heritage Portfolio</u>: one major committee explicitly includes heritage in its portfolio, with responsibilities as proposed above for a Heritage Committee. Provision must be made for close co-operation with other committees, to avoid the potential for siloing.

3.5 The role of Heritage Champion has proved its worth. It should continue, and its existence be given greater recognition and prominence. The Heritage Champion might be part of any of the structures above, by chairing a Heritage Committee, being the Advocate on some committees, acting as one of the Tribunes, or sitting on the committee with heritage in its portfolio.

3.6 Research is needed to discover whether lessons can be learned from how other local authorities reflect heritage in their governance. However, an assessment of the 8 core cities is so far unpromising.

4. Case Studies

4.1 Case Study 1: <u>Heart of the City II</u>

4.1.1 For the committee system to be successful, it must harness the power of citizen engagement and community expertise. This project has provided a rare example of good consultation practice.

4.1.2 Some parts of the scheme were discussed with heritage organisations. By providing the opportunity for conversations about the scheme and listening to the outcome of historical research, it has been possible to work with and celebrate heritage, without compromising viability. This has been most notable in Block H3 (Cambridge Street, including the Collective).

4.1.3 Normally, the first opportunity to provide input is during the planning application process, when plans have been finalised and consultants brought in to ensure it is approved unchanged. Where adopted, this more open and inclusive approach will result in a more successful scheme, compared with the previous adversarial "take-it-or-leave-it" attitude, and should become the benchmark.

4.1.4 However, there has been a marked decline in engagement for latest phase of the scheme, Block H1 (Leah's Yard), and a return to delivering a "fait accompli". This has resulted in a significant loss of irreplaceable heritage and a poorer scheme. Changes have also been proposed to previously approved elements (Blocks A and C) which compromise their heritage. There has also been an entrenched reliance on façade retention over building re-use, despite the climate benefits of the latter.

4.1.5 On balance, Heart of the City II has often demonstrated a refreshing new approach, but there is scope to expand this further. The committee system is one potential vehicle for this.

4.2 Case Study 2: <u>The Late 19th Century</u>

4.2.1 Some misgivings have been expressed that a committee system may lack the capacity to be decisive or to make clear and effective decisions, compared with the cabinet system.

4.2.2 The development of Sheffield from town to city in the last quarter of the 19th century is a clear and compelling demonstration of what can be achieved under a committee system.

4.2.3 This period encompassed the Long Depression of 1873-1896 and changes in political control of the Council. Even so, the Council's achievements include:

- Management of a budget (in 1892-93) of £313,156, equivalent in labour cost terms to £147m in 2020 (the population was approximately 300,000 and the Council consisted of 48 councillors and 16 aldermen).
- Sheffield's receipt of city status in 1893.

- The hugely ambitious "street improvements" which transformed the central layout and streetscape on a scale that significantly exceeds the current Heart of the City, Future High Streets and Castlegate schemes combined.
- Takeover of the tramways, which under municipal control became profitable. By the end of the century plans were under way to electrify the network and quadruple its size from 9 to 36 miles.
- Takeover of the water and electricity companies.
- Creation of the Blackburn Meadows sewage works and an incinerator for refuse from privy middens (a workforce of 500 was required to collect from these).
- 27 miles of new streets and 30 miles of new sewers built in the 10 years to 1899 alone.
- Two fever hospitals built, which were made free in 1893.
- Management of the police force and fire brigade.
- In 1899 there were plans for another "street improvement" scheme, a smallpox hospital, and the purchase of the markets. The School Board schools were taken over 1902-03.

4.2.4 The committee system was no impediment to these achievements. There does not appear to have been any special characteristic that made this possible.

- Overall political party representation on committees was in proportion to the number of seats held, with the governing party holding most (but not all) of the chairs.
- Individual committees were not always proportional, and might even be dominated by the opposition, including the Finance committee (in 1892).
- Committees had the option (as now) to appoint members who were not members of the Council, but in practice only did so on the Free Libraries and Museums committee.
- There were contested votes in committee, with individual votes on contentious issues sometimes minuted.
- Full Council occasionally disapproved individual items in committee reports, but usually approved reports as they stood.

4.2.5 Members of the Council were mostly business owners or professionals, in a position to delegate day to day affairs – there were no clerks or grinders on the Council. However, members often had wide interests outside of the Council, lacked the benefit of today's rapid communications. They had no less capacity for disagreement or obstruction than anyone today, and the minutes record some trenchant debates.

4.2.6 The lesson for us today is that there is no reason why a committee system cannot be decisive and effective, so long as:

- There is a willingness to work across party lines toward common objectives for the public good.
- Chairs of committees are skilled in achieving consensus, rather than wielding power.
- Committees are allowed sufficient autonomy to carry out their business with minimal intervention by Full Council.

4.3   Case Study 3: Castlegate

4.3.1 A major pitfall of the cabinet system is the power that it invests in individuals. Committee chairs, so long as they proceed by building consensus, will oversee better decisions.

4.3.2 The issue of the planned Castlegate Conservation Area illustrates how the committee system, properly used, could protect the interests of both the public and the Council.

4.3.3 In summary, a cabinet reshuffle gave responsibility for Planning to a member widely perceived as favouring unfettered development. A long-standing Council commitment to consult the public on a Conservation Area for the Castlegate was then broken without notice, and when this was challenged, a further statement implied an intention to cancel some existing designations.

4.3.4 Had either decision been subject to debate in committee and decided upon transparently under an expectation to consult stakeholders, there would have been much less potential for significant damage to the historic environment, public concern, or harm to the city's reputation nationally.

4.3.5 Proceeding within the discipline of the committee would also have allowed a more informed decision based on attracting inward investment using the distinctive character of the city and obtaining the

proven economic and well-being benefits of the historic environment. Sources of grants or loans targeted at historic areas would then have been reassured that Sheffield remained an appropriate recipient. The Council would also have avoided the risk of being challenged on whether it was acting in accordance with its statutory duties.

4.3.6   It is also important that committee chairs and membership are not subject to sudden change, and that both chair and members understand the importance of consistency and continuity.

4.4   Case Study 4: Planning Committee

4.4.1   As outlined above, committee members will need to be self-reliant, and have a high level of understanding across a wide range of topics.

4.4.2   The Planning Committee provides some lessons in this area. The existing structure relies largely on officer recommendations, which are usually defended robustly if challenged. Contrary views are heard for only a few minutes, and are usually rebutted but not given informed scrutiny. Where members disagree with a recommendation, they remain reliant on the same officers to provide policy reasons for doing so. The opportunity is usually missed for refining proposals (within what the statutory process allows), obtaining better information or taking advantage of outside expertise.

4.4.3   The Planning Committee cannot operate exactly as other committees, but does clearly illustrate the potential weakness of the committee system without a very high level of member knowledge and engagement.

J Robin Hughes

26th November 2021

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Evidence Session D

Local organisations with an interest in governance and decision making

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Written Evidence From:

Vicky Seddon – Sheffield for Democracy

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Submission to the SCC Governance Committee System Inquiry, November 2021

Thank you for inviting us to make further comments on governance in the City, following on from our document "Improvements we seek to local democracy in Sheffield City Council", dated 1st July 2019. **All the points we made then are still relevant**. Some we want to re-emphasis – 1 , 2, 5). Then there are additional points, reflecting the current situation (3,4)

1. The resources issue is as great now as it was then, if not greater: "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."

2. Also, the need for consensus building is even more appropriate now: "To rejuvenate local democracy, we need cross party consensus and support"

3. Community responses to COVID and especially during the early days of the pandemic, showed a great deal of resourcefulness, including in public health response. We understand that some councillors were surprised and impressed with how their communities responded.

   We think the City Council needs to consider how best to capitalise on, and incorporate within its structure, that kind of local knowledge, expertise and action.

4. The new development, of introducing Local Area Committees, raises the question of how this new structure and the new committee system will interact. It raises again the resources issue: how much resource do you put into decision making and how much into service delivery - when you are already dreadfully cash-strapped? Are on-going committees the only, and best, option?

   Is a system of Local Committees covering such wide areas, the best way of seeking and including community input? Are there other ways of engaging positively with communities, and supporting them? Would an annual meeting in a locality to

ascertain what has worked in SCC's interactions with community groups be a better use of resources?

Certainly, there must be built-in requirements to show active involvement of local groups and residents at a very local level: with opportunities for grassroots initiatives, sharing of aims and proposals at an initial stage, time for consideration and discussion, staff support for practicalities and costing, plus evidence of majority buy-in before adoption.

5. Whatever system is decided upon, reviews should be built in, to gauge whether the process is delivering what was intended.

Vicky Sedddon
Coordinator, Sheffield for Democracy   November 2021

Sheffield for Democracy
Campaigning for a more representative democracy

Submission Part 2 to the SCC Governance Committee System Inquiry, Nov 2021

Responding to specific points on Item 8

1. *Page 64 Background* We agree that it is useful to have a Framework "starting point" proposal

2. *Page 83* We notice that for the *Themed Committees*, it is proposed that "make up is proportional to size of each party group on Full Council". Whilst this does mean that all the political parties that have council members will have committee places (though that leaves open how you then deal with a party that has only 1 councillor, or with independent councillors), it will not reflect the proportion of votes cast by the electors, which would be our preference.

3. *Page 79 "Individual member decision making is not permitted under the Committee System"* Does this mean that the Chair of a Committee will not be able to make decisions on issues that arise between meetings and need to be addressed urgently? We think that possibility should be there, with the proviso that it then needs to be reported to the Committee, and the Committee's retrospective agreement sought.

4. *Page 75 Overarching Committee* Given the assumption (5.1 page 70) that under the new Committee system, it is expected that Council will be busier, perhaps the Overarching Committee could have some role in dealing with some of the extra business, or at least prioritising what is sent to Council?

5. *Pages 75, 76, 77, 78 Local Area Committees; Public Engagement & Communication* Clearly, with an intention to improve the involvement of neighbourhoods and communities, these two issues need to be addressed together. But there is no indication that has been recognised, or how that could be addressed. For us, this is one of the main points that we want to emphasise. There needs to be a discussion on the best use of resources – and whether the emphasis is on more committee meetings, or more practical engagement at grass roots level. Our priority would be that local engagement, but to do it effectively we recognise that it would also require some more staff support for both Councillors and local groups /residents

6. ***Page 77. Other Committees***   Need for a Governance Committee? Yes there is, to monitor and evaluate implementation (especially of LACs). Also for external groups to have access to the Committee, to raise questions about how well the new system is working. However, this could be done on an occasional, not regular, meeting basis.

7. ***Appendix 6 Page 158***   Over arching idea- referring to the comment: "Politics in Sheffield feels like it's always on a war footing. The language and tone used by councillors in public settings like Council meetings is inappropriately rude and aggressive, but they get away with it"

    We absolutely agree that in order to change the culture within the City Council, we need to move away from the "elect one councillor every year for 3 years and then have a fallow year" system, to an all-out election every 4 years. We have been arguing this for some time. Did anyone listen?

    Advantages are twofold: with an election no longer pending each year, councillors are more likely to work around the issues instead of the advantage to their party. And the voters have more choice: electing 3 councillors at the same time, they no longer have to vote for one party: they can choose to support an individual councillor they have a lot of time for, even if that person is not from the party they mainly support, as well as also voting for people from the party they mainly support.

    And with the prospect of a change overnight in the administration could motivate better turn-out. That would be a real bonus!

8. ***Page 161/162. LACs.*** There is an issue about who attends. Our understanding is that these are for the people who live in a specific area, with their councillors comprising the formal membership. So it is puzzling to hear people mention that they have attended several different ones.

    We think the breadth of points raised in this section demonstrates the significance of the City Committee/ LAC relationship and the potential tensions associated with it.

9. ***Page163 Scrutiny*** The Strong Leader / Cabinet system had substantial scrutiny arrangement built in as the balancing act. But surely the new Committee system itself will provide the necessary scrutiny function of policy decisions. And the Governance Committee would be responsible for how the new system is working

10. ***Page 165 Public Engagement*** Much of comment seems to refer to decision making. Seems to be very little commentary on service delivery and outcomes. We need to concentrate on getting the balance right

     Vicky Seddon   Coordinator, Sheffield for Democracy vickysddon2012@gmail.com

Evidence Session D

Local organisations with an interest in governance and decision making

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Written Evidence From:

Nigel Slack – Active Citizen

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Review of Draft Design Principles - November 2021
Governance Committee Agenda item 7

Written Submission / Response from Nigel Slack, Active Citizen

This submission addresses only the Design Principles as drafted in Appendix2. The feedback from the engagement sessions in Appendix1. speak for themselves and whilst I may not agree with all of them they represent a fair reflection of the events I attended and the concerns and hopes of the residents of Sheffield with respect to the Transition to a Committee form of Governance.

My comments and observations in this submission have been drafted to fit the format of the SCC draft and are highlighted as follows;
Black text conforms to the original draft.
Red text are the changes by SCC in this latest draft.
Blue text are my comments or suggestions for further change or consideration.
Grey text are proposed deletions in the current draft.

Appendix 2

The 'critical aims', 'governance principles', 'how we do business' (ways of working) and 'engagement principles' have been numbered for convenient reference.
The first set of principles presented incorporate a range of potential changes in response to the public and stakeholder feedback received (see Appendix 1).
The principles are then reprinted in an unchanged state, to aid with comparison.

Design Principles – as amended, for consideration
Critical governance ambitions
Our critical governance ambitions are enabled by a set of governance principles. These principles were created to inform the design of the Council's new committee-led governance arrangements. These principles should be reflected in the Council's structures, processes and procedures (as set out in the constitution), and in the decision-making culture of the Council.
The following paragraphs express the 'ambitions' as if already achieved. Potentially change "Sheffield City Council is..." to "Sheffield City Council will be ..." and add something about how this will be measured elsewhere in the report?

A. Sheffield City Council is a trusted organisation where decisions are taken in an open and transparent way, and accountability is clear.
SCC has a long way to go on this issue. There is a basic problem that SCC in all parties need to address. **Relaxing control is not losing control**. Council need to learn the lessons of the Pandemic response from Sheffield's communities and grasp the experience and expertise of the people of Sheffield in making this transition work. Officers and CfGS have been delighted by the involvement and commitment of Sheffield people in engaging with this process. Trying to control, through funding or patronage, the way people challenge SCC needs to stop and stop now. The residents of Sheffield are not stupid, such antics are obvious and demeaning to the organisations involved. Come to the table openly and as 'good faith' actors, that will do more to build trust than any level of manipulation or dismissal.

B. Sheffield City Council is a council where all councillors are involved in and able to influence decision making and that citizens can see the contributions their local councillors make to decision-making processes.
This speaks to past issues over Majority votes passed on the nod. Recorded voting should be the normal approach and the way Councillors vote made a part of any decision notice or listing.

C. Sheffield City Council engages, involves and listens to citizens, communities, stakeholders and partners with the belief and expectation that this will be influential, and improve our decisions and decision-making.
Suggests the need for greater detail on results of consultation exercises in SCC reports.

D. Sheffield City Council has a forward-thinking and responsive approach to governance which reflects the increasingly complex policy making environment.

E. Sheffield City Council is a reflective council that is committed to continuously improving governance in l(ight of) response to feedback and best practice

F. Sheffield City Council is committed to local democracy; good democratic principles and practices demonstrably underpin all levels of our city governance.

Design Principles

1. A commitment to openness and transparency of formal decision-making must run through our decision-making arrangements and be embedded in codes of conduct etc.

2. Our decision-making arrangements should minimise unnecessary bureaucracy, and implementation of the new committee-led governance model should as far as possible be kept cost-neutral

3. Comprehensive forward planning of decisions – being clear about what decisions we are planning to take, when they will be taken, who will be taking them.
This should be published in advance annually (after the AGM?) and decisions taken appended to the report as they happen.

4. Clear, publicly available reports from officers that set out the relevant information in an accessible way and which are clear about the way a proposal has been developed and the reasons for a decision being made.
Reports coming forward should never claim that 'no other options' have been considered, unless there is a good and clearly explained reason.

5. Mechanisms for holding decision-makers and Partner organisations (*other parts of the partnership landscape - delete*) to account should be strengthened in any future decision-making arrangements – we must be held accountable for the decisions that we take, and embrace challenge to ensure we're getting the best outcomes for Sheffield.
Speaks to issues over service provider contracts and obscurity created by 'Commercial Confidentiality' issues.

6. Our governance should be underpinned by a commitment to the highest ethical standards as set out in the Nolan Standards on Public Life. Audit & Standards protocols should reflect this directly and have independence & real teeth

7. Our decision-making arrangements should be designed in a way that *(creates channels for - delete)* ensures all 84 Councillors can be involved in, and influence decision making.

8. Council officers play an important role in decision-making via delegated authority and, more generally in our local democracy, as public servants. Accountability, however, lies with elected councillors so, in a new governance system, our decision-making arrangements need to reflect this and not inappropriately increase delegations to officers.

9. Our decision-making arrangements need to strike *(reflect the practical demands on councillors' time. Need to find - delete)* a balance between time spent in formal decision-making meetings in the Town Hall against working with and in communities ensuring personal circumstances do not prevent anyone from becoming a Councillor. *(Time demands shouldn't prohibit people with working/caring commitments from being a Councillor. - delete)*

10. Our decision-making arrangements should increase the connections and safeguard positive relationships with local people, communities and partners, (underpinned by effective ways of working in localities *(such as Local Area Committees) and by recognition of the role of the VCS, partners and stakeholders in representing key groups, networks and communities, all of whose voices are equally valued. We need to strengthen locality arrangements based on the findings of the Big City Conversation and ensure that tThese arrangements should work effectively alongside, and feed into, citywide decision-making processes. -delete from principles and pick up in fine detail later)*

11. Our decision-making arrangements must avoid silo working both within and outside of the City Council, and enable a joined up approach to tackling issues which need the involvement of a number of organisations in the city
This can be tackled through liaison members, cross committee reporting and where issues arise over responsibilities ad-hoc cross committees can be considered.

12. Our decision-making arrangements need to have a mechanism for making urgent decisions openly, transparently and effectively engaging elected councillors.
This is a matter for how legislation impacts technological solutions, otherwise a simple issue.

13. Our governance arrangements need to strengthen our ability to work with our partners in a complex local, sub-regional and national policy environment, and enable us to take a lead on key issues facing the city and the citizens of Sheffield.
Potentially a role for the Council Leader – steered by Full Council delegation?

14. We need to be clear about what we are trying to achieve through our governance arrangements, and measure against these design principles to assess whether it is working

15 We need to identify a forum that enables us to reflect, on an ongoing basis, whether our governance systems are working as anticipated, and if changes need to be made. Could be a role for the LACs and other partner/community organisations to provide regular feedback and to engage with the public?

16 Appropriate democratic checks and balances are in place in the exercise of power, Changing the culture of working within SCC should foster partnership working, cross party consensus decision-making and support the best possible outcomes for the people of the city. *(and working together is valued in our partnership working, decisionmaking and constitutional arrangements (and consensus sought where possible) - to support the best possible democratic decision-making in a diverse city. - delete.)*

How we do Business (Ways of Working)

Overall the role of political parties and particularly 'the whip' is a potential concern for consensus decision-making.

17. We need to take a more innovative (*creative - delete)* approach to communication between residents and the Council, including about what decisions are being made and why, what they mean to residents and what they mean for the city. This needs to be supported by effective communication and information about how decision-making works.
Comms should never be expected to tell lies on behalf of an administration or to succumb to political spin under pressure from political masters (officers or politicians)

18. Role of Full Council – should be reviewed in the light of changes following the referendum – consider how we could make it a more meaningful forum. Potential oversight role in respect of Committees (once or twice a year?) Many other changes may be beneficial but too many to detail at this juncture.

19. Ensure that the appropriate support, training and skills development is continuously available for councillors so they can take full advantage of the opportunities under the new arrangements. Minimum expectations for Cllr development should be set.

20. We need to build a culture in which political disagreement is handled constructively and where members are supported to develop the listening, debating, chairing and committee-membership skills needed for this to happen. As a minimum, recorded voting should be instituted, otherwise minutes can mislead the public. Consider the options for 'Minority Reporting' (used in select committees) where decisions are contentious or very close. This could also constitute a cause to send a decision to Full Council for deliberation/scrutiny. Hopefully pre-decision debate and consultation should make this a relatively rare occurrence. Electoral cycles and the constant electioneering in the current voting system is detrimental to consensus, as party's vie for votes and working time is lost to Purdah each year and council business grinds slowly under electioneering conditions. (equivalent to 2 months per year)

21. We must ensure that a commitment to meaningful engagement, involvement and consultation runs through the organisation. We should renew a commitment to our Consultation Principles, and reflect on how the council's Engagement Standards which are currently in development can improve practice throughout our work.
The work with the Charity **Involve** should help with this.

22. We need to constantly demonstrate how engagement activity is shaping decision making, and be honest about the impact it is having, so communities and partners can understand how their views have been responded to. The influence/impact of engagement with stakeholders, or consultation, will be made clear and documented for all significant decisions.
This should happen for all decisions to a lesser or greater extent. Decisions made under pressure or as a result of direction from HMG or other organisations should be highlighted so people can understand the ability of SCC to counter these decisions. (notable issue in planning)

23. Inequalities and discrimination can play a significant role in capacities and abilities to participate, to be heard, and to exercise influence. Our governance procedures and practices will actively seek to mitigate the impacts of inequality in support of inclusive governance and decision-making.
Important role for LACs & Ward Cllrs in areas of deprivation where poverty and other issues prevent residents from active involvement in local & city decision-making, due to time, or understanding constraints.

24. We need to make it as easy as possible for people to understand their rights with regard to the council and how engage with us – the starting point for this should be clear, consistent, accessible communication about what the Council is doing, what decisions we are planning to take and how to get involved.
Locally accessible locations and support with technology is vital to this. A 'Bill of Rights' type document may also help.

.25. We need to improve the information we provide about how decision making happens across the City as a whole and how partnerships and structures interconnect.
Particularly relevant in holding outside service providers to account.

26. We need to establish a process of continuous engagement so that Members, partners and citizens can give a view on how the system is working.
Very similar to Para.15? - Potentially combine

Engagement principles (as agreed Governance Committee 27.10.2021)

27. **Transparency** - we want to provide relevant information that demonstrates our intentions and decision-making to citizens in a way that is accessible and understandable
Take a lead from residents about transparency – what SCC and public think is 'relevant' may be very different.

28. **Diversity** – We recognise that the city of Sheffield is made up of a broad and diverse group of people encompassing different ethnicities, gender, age,

socio-economic backgrounds, values and physical and mental ability. We have a wide range of languages, cultures, digital, literacy and numeracy skills represented across the city and all backgrounds, interests and needs should be considered

Important role for LACs and whatever 'communities of interest' are to have to represent them.

29. **Inclusive participation** – Provide all citizens with clear routes and opportunities to contribute to and influence outcomes that will directly affect their lives. Schedule meetings at times and in places that are convenient for as many people as possible and provide parallel ways for people to take part in a way that suits them.

Particularly important currently where many disabled people have generally only felt safe to engage virtually and are avoiding face to face events.

30. **Equality** – Encourage open discussion so that no sections of the community are left out and all ideas are treated with respect. Decisions should not be controlled be one particular section of a community.

Unless the decision **only** affects that community?

31. **Responsiveness** – Listen to views, opinions, concerns, complaints and opportunities and be clear how we will use this insight gathered to inform our decision-making.

TRANSITION TO A COMMITTEE SYSTEM INQUIRY - November 2021
Governance Committee Agenda item 8

Written Submission / Response from Nigel Slack, Active Citizen

In commenting on this initial report into the transition framework I am commenting only on the matters in regard to the main questions which Members will need to address under each of the facets of the governance framework, paragraphs 4 to 16.

Text in black is the original text
Text in Blue are my comments & suggestions

The comments are brief and intended to indicate place holders for further discussion later in the design process.

4.0 ISSUES AND OPTIONS – THE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

4.1 At this starting point in the enquiry, a series of key design questions are presented against each facet of the governance framework, rather than explicit options or proposals, although in some cases the questions proposed amount to a series of options.
I shall aim to address my preference for how these questions are handled as well as, potentially, some solutions.

5.0 LEADERSHIP - FULL COUNCIL

5.1 Key design questions:
☐ Do we need a mechanism for calling issues in to Full Council (taking them out of the hands of a committee) in extremis? - Yes but this should be a rare occurrence, a drive for co-operative decision-making should prevail in the vast majority of decisions.
☐ If so, what criteria must be fulfilled?
        o Number of councillors agreeing? - 33-50% of members of the committee?
        o Checklist in constitution eg not vexatious, repetitious, irrelevant etc – The decision on this 'good cause' criteria should be a role of an independent member, taking into account previous evidence of this issue being dea,t with previously.
☐ If the agenda of full Council might be going to get busier (as per testimony from other committee-led authorities), should the meeting be more frequent or just more efficient? - Preferably more efficient but may well have to rely on early experience working out the congestion issues?
        o What aspects of the meeting could be changed/curtailed/redirected elsewhere in order to use members' time as effectively as possible? - Consider the benefit of retaining same number of meetings, AGM, and then half and half Business meetings -vs- Debate meetings (place for motions, petitions requiring debate, etc.)

6.0 LEADERSHIP - LEADER'S ROLE

6.1 Key Design Questions:
☐ What should be written into the newly defined role of the Leader? - Retain the roles as described but in representative or delegated external roles should be guided by the

'overarching/strategy committee'. Might also usefully report back to Full Council on meetings and decisions to which they have contributed.

 Does anything need to change about the role of the Lord Mayor? - Retain Civic & Charity duties. However Leader might be better as the Chair of Full Council meetings, allowing Lord Mayor to continue as a Ward Cllr in addition to ceremonial duties. Public however may be more inclined to support an independent chair for Full Council meetings, following examples of party bias in the past.

 Should the council encourage or facilitate the sharing of roles such as 'Leader' or 'Lord Mayor' between more than one Councillor? - Sharing the role of Lord Mayor is only 1 year so no need to share that role.

o If so, how? - Deputy for the Leader could be appropriate where Leader is on external business, ensuring Council business continues. Deputy drawn from a different Party, rotated annually?

7.0 LEADERSHIP – ROLE OF POLICY COMMITTEE CHAIRS

7.1 Key design questions:
 What should be written into the newly defined role of Policy
Committee Chair? - Similar expectations to current committee chairs but proportionate to the Committee functions. Advocacy, policy priorities, workflow planning, conflict resolution, etc.

 Should there be any constitutional requirements constraining
who Full Council can elect as Chairs or Vice Chairs of policy
committees? - Chairs appointed proportionally to seats held, vice chairs from a different party, proportional appointing where possible.

       o Eg with regard to whether they are in the administration,
opposition, or some other Group?

 Should the council encourage or facilitate the sharing of roles
such as 'committee chair' between more than one Councillor?

       o If so, how? - Appropriate for long term illness, maternity/paternity leave or other job-sharing requirements. Following similar protocols to above.

8.0 COMMITTEES - POLICY COMMITTEES

NOTE – All committees should include co-opted members as needed for issue specific expertise/experience or as general 'critical friend' members.

8.1 As the creation of themed committees is the definitive aspect of change
in the new governance system for the Council to effectively and
efficiently manage the decision-making, it is considered prudent to
begin consideration of real options soonest with regard to this facet of
the governance framework

This is prudent but should retain flexibility for future review.

8.2 Appendix 4 contains a series of hypothetical models showing a very
similar structure of committees to the current model but with various
amounts of Policy Committees replacing the Co-Operative Executive
and all Overview and Scrutiny Committees. - An assumption that committees are all the same size and meet with a similar frequency. Is this the best use of resources or might we best look at the functions to be met by committees designed to reflect their workload in a 'form follows function' approach. Different size committees may be more appropriate but this may only come to light with experience. Could basis of the committees be changed

mid-year?

8.3 Appendix 5 contains certain statistics which it is important to view
alongside these models:

☐ Analysis of the workload on members of various numbers of
committees (the number of members on each committee has
been proportionally reduced for the models with more
committees) – Option 2A is initially the most attractive option for me but depends on
decisions of functional requirements and decision-making remit.

☐ Analysis of the frequency with which any of those Policy
Committees could meet within the bounds of broadly the amount
of democratic and member support officers we have in place (ie
less frequently, if there are more separate committees) – Aim for a minimum of bi-monthly
meetings with a couple of spare meetings for high concentration or complexity issues.

8.4 Mini Case Study: Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council

No current comment on this paragraph, needs to be viewed through the lens of and
similarities to Wirral MBC -v- resources comparison. One thought however. Key Decisions
can be identified and prioritised according to clear criteria and therefore not be slowed by
more general policy issues.

9.0 COMMITTEES - OVERARCHING COMMITTEE

No overarching committee, no matter it's title, should be so powerful as to negate the
reason for the transition in the first place. (becoming a Cabinet by another name). It's
strategic (& possibly budgetary) function should not restrict the operation of the functional
committees to look beyond any remit it is delegated to pursue but Council priorities must
be respected. Although will set functional committee workloads, work programmes should
be at the discretion of the functional committees.

9.1 Key design questions:

☐ Will there be a committee with a strategic/cross-
cutting/coordinating role? - Yes but should work towards consensus in strategy
development and retain proportionality in it's membership.

☐ If so what will its functions be?

o Financial? - Lead on budget development each financial year and working across all
decision by Full Council committees to deliver a feasible budget overall and for each
functional committee, for .

o Coordinating Policy? - Work with all committees to consolidate an overall strategy to be
presented to Full Council.

o Determining which committee will lead on cross-cutting
issues? - No, this should be determined by Chairs & Vice Chairs of functional committees
that include elements of this issue within their standard remit. Alternatively, an ad-hoc
committee could be established with a fixed and restricted terms to address the issue.

o Strategic Issues? - Yes for agreement by Full Council

o Urgent decisions? - depends on legal restrictions but technology should enable
functional committees to meet (at least quorate & with more than one party represented)
on an urgent basis.

o Determining whether to 'call-in' an issue to Council? - For call-ins requested by public
through a petition function or where an agreed proportion of Full Council request it. Other

call-ins to be determined by functional committees

o Corporate Communications? - To some extent, but functional committees should have some autonomy in Comms, provided they can pass the test of press and advertising standards.

o Holding other policy committees to account on delivery of

their plans? - Yes – to an extent. Functional committees should provide regular updates to Full Council on progress of strategies delegated at the beginning of the year and Overarching Committee can comment on that progress and by exception, identify failures in their view and recommend to Full Council any steps to be taken to address the issues.

 If so, will its membership include the Chairs of the other

committees? Vice Chairs? - No, separate committee, retaining proportionality.

 If so, how will proportionality be maintained?

10.0 COMMITTEES - LOCAL AREA COMMITTEES

10.1 Key Design Questions:

[Noting that the timetable for devolution of decision-making authority to LACs is outside the scope of this project]

 How do LACs escalate issues for strategic consideration? - Where 50% of a LACs cllrs agree a matter can be escalated to a committee of their choice. Where a petition of x-number of residents is presented to the LAC a matter must be escalated to the overarching committee for allocation to a functional committee or to an ad-hoc committee.

 What types of issues or question are appropriate for the strategic parts of the organisation to ask LACs to raise at their local meetings? - No restrictions on subject matter but must be relevant to that area or a ward within that area. Must include a request to consult with residents.

11.0 COMMITTEES - STATUTORY SCRUTINY

11.1 Key Design Questions:

 Which committees should cover the statutory responsibility to scrutinise the Health Service, flooding, and crime and disorder?

o The relevant policy cttee? - Yes – if determined as a subset of the functional committee, should be drawn from more than one party and proportional if possible

o One or more other pre-existing committees in the structure? - Only if it does not 'fit' with a functional committees remits.

 Are any additional checks and balances on decision-makers required?

o Opposition Groups within the decision-making committee itself – If possible all decision-making should be taken by proportional groups – if not possible, at least 2 parties should be represented.

o Audit Committee – Audit & Standards needs extensive review within the proposed Constitutional review.

o Finance/resources committee – Part of the Audit & Standards committee?

o Openness and transparency / elections

o Mechanism for calling issues in to Full Council in extremis? - As with functional committees.

12.0 COMMITTEES - OTHER COMMITTEES

12.1 Key design questions:

☐ Will there be a need for a separate Governance Committee? - Almost certainly for a period of time, could be constituted as an ad-hoc committee to start with and an initial time limited remit.

o To review the model in due course and continue to make recommendations for improvement. - Yes and regularly initially, potentially reducoing over time.

☐ Will there be a separate 'urgency' committee? - Only if technology cannot address this issue.

☐ How will the role of the current Joint Commissioning Committee be incorporated in the model? - Within a relevant functional committee or as part of the overarching committee if the functionality would be better.

☐ Will anything need to change about Joint Committees and Partnership Boards in the new framework? - That is best answered by those working these areas but should be explained and justified if yes.

☐ Can we streamline some of the other existing committees/subcommittees?

o There must be two Licencing committees for technical legal reasons, one dealing with statutory licensing and one with other licensing functions, but the membership can be the same for both and they can meet with the same frequency between them (as now) so not much must operationally change about how this currently works – No change needed unless functional issues come to light.

☐ Which Committee should oversee the development and maintenance of a member development strategy and plan which are fit for purpose to support the transition to committees?

o Full Council?

o Governance Committee? - Should draw up the strategy taking advice from officers as to the relevant functional committee to deliver.

o Audit & Standards Committee? - Needs to work on constitutional issues around Cllr roles & responsibilities, as well as Nolan Principles being incorporated into a standards policy with real teeth.

☐ Who should replace the current Co-op Executive nominees on the Health and Wellbeing Board? - The delegated chair & Vice chair from the relevant functional committee, plus 2 others to allow party balance where possible.

13.0 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNICATIONS

13.1 Key Design Questions:

☐ How will policy committees approve/conduct comms & engagement?

o Can the Chair of each policy committee commission comms or is this a role for an overarching committee? - Yes, provided it meets press and advertising standards

☐ What is the role of Group Spokespersons? - To reflect the view of the whole committee.

☐ What communication channels should committees routinely use to communicate with the public and what format should this take? - Whatever is most appropriate and can be afforded within budgets.

☐ What will the model be for public participation in committee meetings?

o in person, remotely, both? - Yes

o Continue with open time for public questions, or some
other mechanism for ensuring residents are speaking in
the most impactful setting (and keeping Full Council
focused on strategic matters)? - Will depend on final structure and role of Full Council etc.
o Should public questions be written and submitted in
advance? - This should be preferred but sometimes issues arise after question deadlines
and should be allowed if the chair is willing.
o Should public questions at committee be verbal or written
only? - Verbal where people are able to do that. Remote access should be available to
those who find it impossible to attend in person, disability, covid shielding etc.

14.0 ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES - SCHEMES OF DELEGATION

14.1 Key design questions:
☐ Do the current decision-making limits and delegations for Officers
need to change? - Probably, the public have expressed a profound concern over the
power officers have wielded in the past.
☐ If so, how should a threshold be defined? - Partly by all three criteria below
o Based on member capacity?
o Based on a definition of what is strategic?
o Based on efficiency/bureaucracy/pace?
☐ How do we ensure there is appropriate member oversight and
opportunities to hold decision-makers to account? - Reporting of decisions made through
delegated authority should be published clearly and referred to the relevant functional
committees for comment or review.

15.0 ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES - STATUTORY RESPONSIBILITIES FOR MEMBERS

15.1 Key Design Questions:
☐ What responsibilities and extra duties including various Boards
should be considered necessarily associated with the Lead
Member for Children's Services? - That requires a functional analysis of the role.
☐ Are these achievable alongside a (chairmanship) Chairing role? - As above

16.0 MISC - STAFFING, RELATIONSHIPS, CASEWORK ETC

16.1 Key design questions:
☐ What degree of officer support will be needed by each committee
and their Chairs and Vice Chairs?
o Primarily these are operational decisions relating to the
officer establishment and service offer - What does service offer mean?
☐ What are the ambitions for digitally-enabled ways of working? - Use as needed so long
as it does not exclude anybody from engagement.
o Online agendas/papers?
o Hybrid meeting technology and protocols?
o Online engagement?
☐ Who will define what 'Special Responsibility Allowances' need to
be paid, and at what level, under the new arrangements?

o An 'Independent Remuneration Panel' is being convened
as usual. - This body should recommend on this issue but for approval by Full Council.
 Should we continue to operate a public forward plan of decisions,
and the concept of 'key decisions'? - Yes provided this ensures transparency and
openness for all decisions.

Submission Ends

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Evidence Session F
Academic

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Written Evidence From:

Matthew Wood, University of Sheffield

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Briefing for Sheffield City Council Governance Committee

Dr Matthew Wood, University of Sheffield

My research at the University of Sheffield contributes to the debate about a transition to a modern committee system in Sheffield City Council. The key point is that the council needs to move from thinking it's possible to **depoliticise** the debate, to ensuring the new committees have **credible accountability and transparency processes informed by good evidence**.

1. Policy makers should consider less delegation and more inclusion

My book *Hyper-active Governance* shows that policy makers too often go back and forth trying to delegate policy decisions (i.e. **depoliticise** them), then trying to control them from a distance, and then trying to avoid blame for any negative outcomes.

This dynamic of delegation, control and blame avoidance is a vicious cycle with debilitating effects. It suppresses the real issues at stake. Instead, I provide evidence for an **inclusive** approach to policy making that encourages collaborative working between political parties and stakeholders, incorporating diverse forms of expertise and clarifying lines of responsibility.

Proposal: My advice is that new committees should set up processes so thy are explicitly and directly involved in collecting and considering evidence with stakeholders to make policy decisions.

2. Collaboration means politics works differently

Budget reductions over the past decade have left Council resources depleted. Written evidence submitted to Parliament by SCC states: "the result of these significant funding reductions has equated to Sheffield having to deal with a cut of £36% in spending power in the period 2010/11 to 2017/18, far above the national average". My research shows austerity measures significantly constrain what local councils can achieve, despite the English devolution agenda claiming to empower them.

In this context, my research shows collaboration is crucial to implement policy. The Council already recognises this need for culture change. But it also means political parties must think about the role of manifestos differently, and be willing to deliberate. They must recognise the legitimacy of non-party political groups (e.g. VCS) in policy making processes.

Proposal: My advice is for members on new committees to explicitly commit to deliberating over how to reconcile their conflicting policies, perhaps by signing a formal declaration of intent for collaboration.

3. Credible accountability

My research shows that where there is **better accountability**, public policy is more **credible**.

[Data I have collected](#) show that governance relationships feel more accountable to those involved when government officials are perceived to be **transparent in how they assess information**, and have **systematic data and evidence to hold decision makers to account**.

My [recent research](#) suggests how **public hearings** can make this happen. I suggest that public hearings ought to be carried out with: **1) diverse forms of evidence, 2) symbolically meaningful and carefully arranged physical space, and 3) an inclusive and positive ethic from committee chairs and members.**

Proposal: My advice is for the new committees to form a 'policy lab' to develop their capacity for collecting a variety of evidence, and to hold regular public hearings to consider this evidence in a clear and transparent manner.