

Governance Committee

Thursday 9 February 2023 at 2.00 pm

Town Hall, Sheffield, S1 2HH

The Press and Public are Welcome to Attend

Membership

Councillor Julie Grocutt
Councillor Sue Alston
Councillor Penny Baker
Councillor Christine Gilligan
Kubo
Councillor Dianne Hurst
Councillor Mark Jones
Councillor Mary Lea
Councillor Mike Levery
Councillor Bryan Lodge
Councillor Joe Otten
Councillor Mick Rooney

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
9 FEBRUARY 2023**

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** (Pages 5 - 8)
Members to declare any interests they have in the business to be considered at the meeting.
- 5. Minutes of Previous Meeting** (Pages 9 - 14)
To approve the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 8 December 2022.
- 6. Public Questions and Petitions**
To receive any questions or petitions from members of the public.
- 7. Governance Review - Engagement Findings and Next Steps** (Pages 15 - 36)
Report of the Interim Director Legal and Governance & The Director of Policy and Performance
- 8. Date of Next Meeting**
The next meeting of the Committee will be held on 2 March 2023

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ADVICE TO MEMBERS ON DECLARING INTERESTS AT MEETINGS

If you are present at a meeting of the Council, of its Policy Committees, 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 Standards Committee in relation to a request for dispensation.

Further advice can be obtained from David Hollis, Interim Director of Legal and Governance by emailing david.hollis@sheffield.gov.uk.

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Governance Committee

Meeting held 8 December 2022

PRESENT: Councillors Julie Grocutt (Chair), Sue Alston (Deputy Chair), Christine Gilligan Kubo, Dianne Hurst, Mark Jones, Mary Lea, Mike Levery, Bryan Lodge, Joe Otten and Richard Williams (Substitute Member)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Penny Baker and Mick Rooney.

2. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

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

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

4.1 RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2022 be agreed as an accurate record.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

5.1 There were no public questions or petitions received.

6. GOVERNANCE REVIEW UPDATE

6.1 The Committee received a presentation from the Interim Director of Legal and Governance, David Hollis. The presentation updated Members on the progress of the 6-month review of governance arrangements since the last meeting of the Committee.

6.2 The Policy and Improvement Officer, Emily Standbrook-Shaw informed the Committee of what engagement activities were underway. Regarding Member engagement, the online survey had launched, drop-in sessions had been arranged for each of the Policy Committees

and an update will be taken to the LAC (Local Area Committee) Chairs Group.

- 6.3 In regard to Citizen engagement, the online survey had launched along with an invitation for citizens to engage, and also the LAC networks had been used to publicise the ongoing work and how citizens could engage with the Council on this.
- 6.4 In regard to Officer engagement, the online survey had launched and structured conversations with various officers and groups were being arranged.
- 6.5 The Policy and Improvement Officer explained that drop-in sessions had only been carried out at two of the Policy Committee meetings. Therefore, the next steps were to carry out drop-in sessions at the remaining Policy Committees throughout December 2022. She added that Officers would be in touch with Members of the Governance Committee about taking part in public facing events.
- 6.6 Members of the Committee were asked to give their views on the update and presentation and the key points to note were: -
- 6.7 A Member of the Committee asked whether staff and pupils at schools and colleges were being engaged, as part of this piece of engagement.

The Policy and Improvement Officer responded that this was a group that had not been engaged, although agreed that it would be important to do so.

The Head of Policy and Partnerships, Laurie Brenan added that the Governance Committee working group could explore long-term development and engagement by looking into how the Council promoted and did business with different groups in the City, In particular younger voices.

The Chair (Councillor Julie Grocutt) mentioned how capturing the thoughts of young people were valuable. She added that the Committee could engage with the Youth Cabinet and secondary schools.

- 6.8 RESOLVED: That the Committee notes the update on the 6-month review of governance arrangements.

7. GRANTS, LOANS, AND GUARANTEES: DELEGATION REVIEW

- 7.1 The Committee received a report of the Assistant Director of Legal and Governance, Robert Parkin which invited Members to consider the current delegations in relation to matters that related to receiving annually recurrent grants, and also grant aid, loans and guarantees. It

also invited Members to consider developing the role of Policy Committees, the role of the Director of Finance and how the role of Communities Parks, and Leisure Policy Committee was described in relation to promoting, and monitoring the role of the voluntary sector.

- 7.2 The Assistant Director of Legal and Governance was in attendance to present the report to the Committee.
- 7.3 The Assistant Director of Legal and Governance explained that the purpose of the report was for Members to consider the issues presented, and then determine whether they would like Officers to go away and report back with further details and specific changes that could be incorporated into the Council's constitution.
- 7.4 The Committee was informed that currently, the Council's constitution stated that the acceptance of grants under £750,000 be delegated to Officers, under delegated powers. Decisions over that amount were referred to the Finance Sub-Committee. Therefore, Policy Committees had not had a formal role on the acceptance of grants over that threshold.
- 7.5 It was also explained that the Communities, Parks and Leisure Policy Committee had delegated authority in relation to any grant where it would affect the voluntary sector, even where it fell within the subject matter remit of another Policy Committee.
- 7.6 Another aspect to consider was decisions on recurring grants. It was explained that certain external grant funding was recurrent on an annual basis without material change in the terms and conditions of funding. These were not often referred to in the annual Council Budget. There was no clear provision in the constitution setting out delegation to accept such recurrent grants under the committee system.
- 7.7 The Council's Finance Manager, Mark Wassell explained that in relation to recurrent grants, the Council currently had approximately 60 of those grants and these were previously dealt with in block by the relevant Cabinet Member in the previous structure. These grants were usually quite fixed and had been recurring for many years and were likely to continue. Therefore, it was suggested that a better process of dealing with these may be for the approval to be delegated to the Director of Finance to sign them off.
- 7.8 Members of the Committee asked questions and the key points to note were: -
- 7.9 A Member of the Committee asked for examples of recurrent grants.

The Finance Manager explained that these types of grants varied. Some examples were adult education grants, higher education funding, school milk and free school meals. As previously mentioned, the

conditions of these grants do not vary greatly.

- 7.10 A Member of the Committee mentioned that LACs needed to be informed when grant funding came into their respective areas.

The Finance Manager mentioned that on average, the Council received 10 grants a month. The finance service then determined where the grants needed to go. Therefore, informing the relevant business unit manager, and explaining how to deal with them.

The Interim Director of Legal and Governance stated that acceptance of grants delegated to Officers, required that decision to be published. Therefore, this process was transparent. He added that there were grants which the Council do not bid for, they were just given from the Government. There were others that are given and were ring fenced for a purpose although there was sometimes discretion within that, of how the Council spent that funding. There was also grants that the Council do bid for and the process and reason for that bid sets out how that funding can be spent, this was where Member engagement would be crucial.

- 7.11 A Member of the Committee mentioned how the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee previously agreed to extend the length of grants to the voluntary sector and how this was appreciated by those sectors. He believed that decisions on grants should sit within the role of Policy Committees.

- 7.12 A Member of the Committee raised the importance of Officers consulting with Members before they determined how a grant would be spent, ensuring that money is spent effectively. It was added that, in regard to recurrent grants, the Council needed to ensure they were doing everything they could to promote the local economy. An example of this was given, that the recurrent grant of school milk was sourced by a local supplier.

- 7.13 The Interim Director of Legal and Governance highlighted the difference between revenue and capital grants, and suggested that capital grants remained with Strategy and Resources Policy Committee and Finance Sub-Committee as part of the capital process. The revenue grants were what was being discussed at the meeting.

- 7.14 A Member of the Committee also believed that awarding grants for a particular sector or area should be determined by the relevant Policy Committee, as that Committee would be best informed to decide whether the strategy of that grant would deliver the best outcome for the people of Sheffield.

- 7.15 A Member of the Committee stated how delegated powers to Officers needed to be explored further. It was mentioned that Officers should be able to carry out delegations against the strategic framework in which

Members created. It was important for Members and Officers to carry out an effective process although equally important to have that separation.

7.16 A Member of the Committee raised the importance of processes of dealing with grants being transparent and accountable. It was added that a mechanism needed to be defined, so that LACs were aware of what grant funding was going to their respective areas.

7.17 A Member of the Committee summarised that Members felt like there needed to be an open and transparent process with dealing with grants, and that the decision be determined by the relevant Policy Committee. It was also suggested that where recurrent grants be delegated to Officers, each year they were reported back to that relevant Policy Committee.

7.18 The Assistant Director of Legal and Governance explained that the next steps would be for Officers to take away the comments made by Members at the meeting and prepare a report to be brought back to a future Committee. He mentioned that a Governance Committee workshop could be used before that Committee, to ensure that the aspects mentioned in the meeting were covered appropriately.

7.19 RESOLVED: That the Governance Committee (1) notes and comments on the report on the current delegations in relation to Grants, Loans, and Guarantees, annually recurring grants, and the role of the Communities, Parks, and Leisure Committee in relation to grant aid in the voluntary sector; and

(2) requests that the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer prepares a report to be considered at a future meeting of the Governance Committee which:

- i. Recommends revised levels of delegated authority in respect of the approval of the receipt of External Grants by the City Council in the contexts of:
 - a) External grants to be used for onward third-party grant aid, and loans; and,
 - b) External grants to be received and used directly by the Council;
- ii. Proposes revisions to the role of the Communities, Parks, and Leisure Committee in respect of the award of Grant Aid;
- iii. Proposes a role for the Policy Committees in making decisions on providing Grant Aid, Loans, and Guarantees in relation to matters within their remit, while retaining a

role on larger sized or mixed remit Grant Aid, Loans, and Guarantees for the Finance Sub-Committee.

- iv. Proposes a Delegation to the Director of Finance and Commercial Services in relation to the acceptance of annually recurrent grants.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 8.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 12 January 2023.



Report to Governance Committee

Author/Lead Officer of Report: Emily Standbrook-Shaw, Policy & Improvement Officer

Tel: 0114 205 6272

Report of: *David Hollis, Interim Director of Legal & Governance, James Henderson, Director of Policy & Performance*

Report to: *Governance Committee*

Date of Decision: *9th February 2023*

Subject: *Governance Review – Engagement Findings and Next Steps*

Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) been undertaken?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If YES, what EIA reference number has it been given? <i>(Insert reference number)</i>				
Has appropriate consultation taken place?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has a Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) been undertaken?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Purpose of Report:

This report provides Governance Committee with an update on the 6 month review of new governance arrangements.

It sets out the activity carried out during the 'Engagement' Phase of the review, details the findings from the Engagement, identifies key areas for action in the next, 'Action Planning' Phase of the review.

Recommendations:

Governance Committee is asked to:

- Consider and note the findings from the Engagement Phase of the review.
- Note that findings related to Full Council have been passed to the Full Council working group for consideration as part of their work.
- Consider whether the issues identified for the Action Planning Phase of the Review are the right ones and;
 - Agree that those requiring a change to the system are taken forward to Governance Committee Action Planning Workshops
 - Agree that those requiring improvements to how we explain, communicate and support the system are actioned by officers, with progress reports back to Governance Committee at the appropriate time
 - Identify which issues can be actioned prior to the Council's AGM in May 2023, and which will be actioned in the longer term
 - Consider how issues relating to the wider system, beyond the scope of this review are taken forwards.

Background Papers:

[Report to Governance Committee, 10th November 2022, Planning for the 6 Month Review of New Governance Arrangements](#)

1. Governance Review – Background to the Review.

1.1 As part of our transition to a committee system of governance in May 2022, Full Council agreed that:

“The Governance Committee shall conduct a review of the effectiveness of the new system, commencing six months after implementation (November 2022) with a view to provide Full Council with insight into what has worked well and alongside any recommendations.”

At the point the review was to commence, the Committee System was in the very early stages of its operation. Policy Committees were into their 3rd round of meetings, and new ways of working were still bedding in.

Taking an early look at the effectiveness of the new system gives us an opportunity to address any issues before they become longstanding or ‘normed’ in the new system and also enables us to identify good practice to share more widely. We are not however looking at a wholesale redesign of the system – the review is about continuous improvement, using collective insight and experience of how the governance model has worked to date to make it better for citizens, Members and officers.

1.2 During October 2022, the Governance Committee carried out a scoping exercise, and at its meeting on November 10th 2022 agreed that the review would be structured around 6 themes and 15 questions:

Overall Structure

- Do the Policy Committees have clear remits, are they the right remits and are the links to other Committee remits working?
- Are the roles within the Committee System clear and working as intended?

Decision Making and Delegation

- Are decisions being made effectively and efficiently?

Capacity and Resource

- Are Policy Committees adequately supported?
- Is the preparation for Policy Committees reasonable and proportionate?
- Do Members and Officers have the tools and time to support, deliver and develop in the committee system?

Working Practices

- Are pre-meets and briefings working effectively for all members of a committee?
- What do members, officers, organisations and the public think has changed between the old system and new?
- Are Policy Committees undertaking the type of activities pertaining to policy and decision making that they intended to do?

- Are Local Area Committees and Policy Committees working well together? Is there anything that could be improved?

Citizen & Community Engagement and Formal Participation

- What is working well in terms of engagement for the public and are there any gaps?
- What is the volume and nature of public questions?
- How effective are we at responding to questions and petitions?

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, Communication & Information Availability.

- How well are we mitigating the risks identified in the Equalities Impact Assessment?
- How accessible are the Policy Committees and their outputs?

The Engagement Phase of the review was structured around these themes, and launched in November 2022. The activity undertaken, and the findings of the engagement are set out below.

2. Engagement Activity

Governance Committee identified 3 groups of key stakeholders to seek feedback from during the review – Members, Officers and Citizens.

2.1 Member Engagement

- The three main Political Groups submitted group responses to the review.
- We engaged with over 50 Members individually. This took place predominantly through ‘drop-in’ sessions held after the December round of Policy Committees, with some Members emailing submissions in directly, and some opting to fill in the online survey, which ran between 25th November 2022 and 2nd January 2023. The relatively low response rate to the survey means it is difficult to draw firm conclusions from the quantitative responses, but we have used the information as insight where appropriate.
- We also attended the LAC Chairs meeting to get views on the relationship between LACs and Policy Committees.

2.2 Officer Engagement

- An online survey ran between the 25th November 2022 and the 2nd January 2023. We received 41 responses.
- The Review Team attended a range of officer forums including, Portfolio Leadership Teams, Service Leadership Teams, Heads of Service Network, Performance Leads Group, Committee Launch Group, Transition to Committees Equalities Sub-group, Sustainability Team and LAC staff.

2.3 Citizen Engagement

- An online survey ran between 25th November 2022 and the 2nd January 2023. This was sent to people who had subscribed to the 'Transition to Committees' Gov Delivery mailing list; people who had attended meetings to ask public questions; LAC mailing lists; Sheffield City Partnership Board mailing list; Sheffield Equality Partnerships mailing list. We received 50 responses.
- The survey email asked people to contact us if they would like to be involved in workshops or engagement activity related to the review. There was limited uptake to this, but it did lead to conversations with interested stakeholders including Disability Sheffield and HealthWatch Sheffield.
- We received a small number of submissions from Citizens via email.

3. Engagement Findings

The Review Team have synthesised the findings from the engagement activity under each of the review questions, and from that pulled out the key actions to undertake in the next 'Action Planning' phase of the review.

Overall Structure

3.1 Do the Policy Committees have clear remits, are they the right remits and are the links to other Committee remits working?

Members and officers were clear that the current Policy Committee remits are unbalanced – with some having overly large remits. This was most often mentioned in relation to the Transport, Regeneration and Climate Change (TRCC) Policy Committee, where people told us that too much agenda time is spent on local and operational transport issues, leaving inadequate time for the Committee to consider important strategic and policy issues – including Climate Change. Some Members and officers felt that more decisions could be delegated to LACs or a sub-committee to help remedy this.

Some Members and citizens feel that the Licensing Committee, rather than the Waste and Streetscene Policy Committee, should be the place where Licensing Policy is decided.

How cross-cutting issues are dealt with in the Committee System has come up a lot in our conversations. Officers have told us that it can be very difficult to navigate the system and know where to go for decisions and who to brief – especially when the issue is time sensitive. Several Members have questioned whether the role of the Strategy & Resources Policy Committee in cross-cutting issues is working effectively – and feel that S&R has tended to make the decisions itself, rather than determine the appropriate Policy Committee to make the decision. Some citizens told us that it can be hard to keep track of an issue when it is being discussed in more than one Committee.

Proposed Issues for Action Planning Phase:

- Consider whether the current process for cross-cutting issues could be improved, and how we can improve advice and guidance to officers on how to navigate decisions through the system.
- Consider whether current delegations are appropriate, particularly in relation to transport and highways issues.
- Consider whether current Committee remits are appropriately balanced
- Consider whether changes are needed in relation to where decisions on Licensing Policy are taken.

3.2 Are the roles within the Committee System clear and working as intended?

Of the roles within the Committee system, the role of co-chair is the least understood. 50% of members who responded to the survey said that the role was not clear to them, compared to 33% who said that the role was clear (17% did not answer this question). Some Members and officers told us that they weren't clear how responsibilities were split between co-chairs, and that this could be confusing, and risks issues falling through the gaps. Whilst some people welcomed the opportunity co-chairing brings to lighten the load on one individual, others observed that co-chairs attend all briefings and seems to be a duplication of the roles, rather than sharing.

A recurring theme from Members was that the roles of deputy chair and group spokesperson are essentially the same in terms of workload, and therefore that the group spokesperson role should be remunerated. This issue was recently considered by the Independent Remuneration Panel, whose recommendation was the role should not be remunerated but did suggest it ought to be looked at again after this review. Some Members also raised concern that the Chair of the Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee is currently unremunerated, and that this should be considered.

Some officers have found that multiple committee leadership roles have led to confusion about how and who to brief and when, and would appreciate a clearer articulation of the roles, and what the expectations are between officers and members. What's the right forum for an early steer on policy development? Is it appropriate to brief only the Chair?

Some issues were raised in relation to the Strategy & Resources Committee. One political group submission suggested that the role of substitute members should be the same for Strategy & Resources Committee as for others, and should therefore be permitted – to retain proportionality. It was also suggested that Deputy Leader have an automatic place on the Strategy & Resources Committee – without having to also chair a Policy Committee. The role as is currently stands feels too big.

The focus of our engagement here was on the roles in the Committee System, however one political group submission suggested that the review should look at redefining the role of the Leader in the Committee System. This was out of scope, however may be something the Governance Committee would like to pick up in future pieces of work.

Proposed Issues for Action Planning Phase:

- Develop clearer guidance on the roles and responsibilities for Chairs, Co-Chairs, Deputy Chairs and Group Spokespeople and how officers are expected to brief and interact with these roles.
- Develop clearer definition and expectation of the Co-Chair role
- Follow up remuneration issues around Group Spokespeople and Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee Chair.
- Consider Deputy Leader membership and substitutions for S&R Committee.

Decision Making and Delegation

3.3 Are decisions being made effectively and efficiently?

Of those who responded to the survey, only 27% of officers and 22% of Members think that the work programme is effective in getting the right decision made at the right time. Officers told us they are sometimes given inconsistent advice about which decisions need to go to Committee, and which Committee they need to go to – and would welcome a ‘route map’ that sets out the process clearly.

Members told us that they need access to information far enough in advance of meetings to facilitate discussions with their group in order to be able to make decisions. This includes appropriate briefing, and timely publication of reports.

46% of officers said that too many decisions are being taken by Policy Committees that could be taken by officers, and some feel the financial threshold for Committee decisions is too low. Some Members and officers feel that decisions are currently being made in the wrong forum – for example local and operational transport issues could be made at LACs or a sub-committee – freeing up TRCC agendas for strategic decisions and policy development.

One political group submission suggested that a ‘call-in’ mechanism for decisions should be adopted – so that a decision can be sent back for Committee consideration where it contradicts other Council policy.

Proposed Issues for Action Planning Phase:

- Consider how we can develop our approach to work programming so that it becomes an effective tool for Members and officers in getting the right decisions made at the right time and in line with the Council’s strategic ambitions.
- Consider how we provide officers with clear and consistent advice about how to navigate decisions through the Committee System.
- Consider whether current delegations are appropriate and enabling Policy Committees to focus on the right issues
- Consider options around ‘call-in’ of decisions.

Capacity and Resource

3.4 Are Policy Committees adequately supported?

59% of officers and 61% of Members who responded to the survey said they are satisfied or very satisfied with the support they receive, with 17% of officers and 11% of Members saying they were unsatisfied or very unsatisfied and 22% of officers and 28% of Members saying that they were unsure.

Officers involved in the administration of Committees, and the 'sign off' process (eg. assessing the legal, financial, equalities or climate implications of reports and decisions) for committee reports have found that their workloads have increased significantly since the Committee System was introduced. They have reported that an increase in the number of papers being submitted at the last minute creates 'pinch points' where workload becomes unmanageable. This also results in late publication of committee papers – which Members and citizens have told us is problematic.

Officers in portfolios also reported that servicing the Committee System is using more resource – with 56% of officers who responded to the survey saying that the Committee System has negatively impacted their ability to carry out other parts of their role. Officers told us that they would like clear and consistent advice and support on which decisions need to go to Committee, and clear routes for how to get there. This would help to get reports in a timely fashion.

Proposed Issues for Action Planning Phase:

- Develop clear and consistent advice for officers about how to navigate decisions through the Committee System
- Develop mechanisms for Portfolio Officers to share best practise in resourcing the Committee System

3.5 Is the preparation for Policy Committees reasonable and proportionate?

67% of members, and 49% of officers who responded to the survey said that preparation time for Policy Committee meetings is reasonable, compared to 10% and 11% who said it was not reasonable.

A frequent issue raised in our discussions with Members was that they are required to do a huge amount of pre-reading to prepare for Committee meetings. Overly lengthy reports, and late publication of papers makes this difficult and is a key frustration for Members. Of the 42 meetings that took place before 7th December 2022, 12 agendas were published with at least 1 report 'to follow'. One member reported having over 1,000 pages of reports to read over a week.

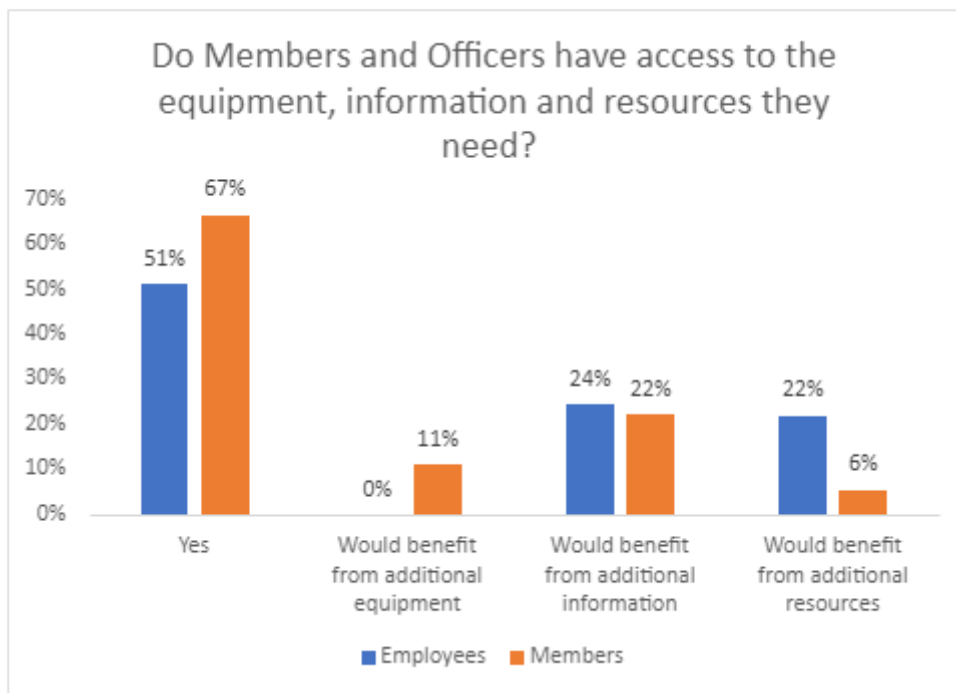
We know from conversations with officers involved in writing reports for committees, and those involved in signing them off, that last minute changes can lead to late publication of papers. Officers need to understand the process for getting a report to a committee, seek engagement from

legal/finance/equalities/climate sign off colleagues at an early stage, and produce a report in good time for the deadline.

Proposed Issues for Action Planning Phase:

- Consider how we can help officers to better understand the process for getting a Committee report prepared, signed off and published in a timely way.
- Develop training for officers on effective, accessible report writing

3.6 Do Members and Officers have the tools and time to support, deliver and develop in the committee system?



When asked what would be helpful in terms of tools and support, Members suggested that more briefings, and PA support would be useful, and suggested that more a more frequent, regular (same time, same day) meeting schedule would help to manage workloads.

Officers gave a range of suggestions including, more staff, clearer guidance on navigating the system, earlier engagement with 'sign off' services, opportunities to share experiences and best practice with officers across different areas, report templates that are appropriate for 'non-decision' reports, more officer support for the new Climate Impact Assessment, and training.

Proposed Issues for Action Planning Phase:

- Consider the meeting cycle and schedule
- Consider how we can provide Members and officers with 'quick wins' in terms of tools and support.

Working Practices

3.7 Are pre-meets and briefings working effectively for all Members of a committee?

Members have told us that they value briefings, and would like more of them, but have observed that there is a variety of practice across Committees in terms of how frequent they are and who attends them.

It is not clear that the intended process, of Chairs, Deputy Chairs and Group Spokespeople attending briefings and pre-meetings and taking that information back to their Groups is working consistently. Officers are required to brief party groups more than they had anticipated in the new system, and are unsure what expectations of this are.

Officers have reported that preparation for briefings is labour intensive, and difficult to organise across many diaries, but that briefings are helping to develop relationships with Committees and grow knowledge.

Officers and Members have reported that some briefings have been poorly attended by Members, but recognise the diary pressures that many members have. Some Members told us they would prefer to have a regular schedule of briefings, happening on the same day and time each week, to help with caring/work responsibilities etc.

Proposed Issues for Action Planning Phase:

- Establish a consistent set of expectations around briefings, including who should be involved, how often they should happen, the role of group briefings and how they interact with pre-agenda and pre-meetings.

3.8 What do Members, officers, organisations and the public think has changed between the old system and new?

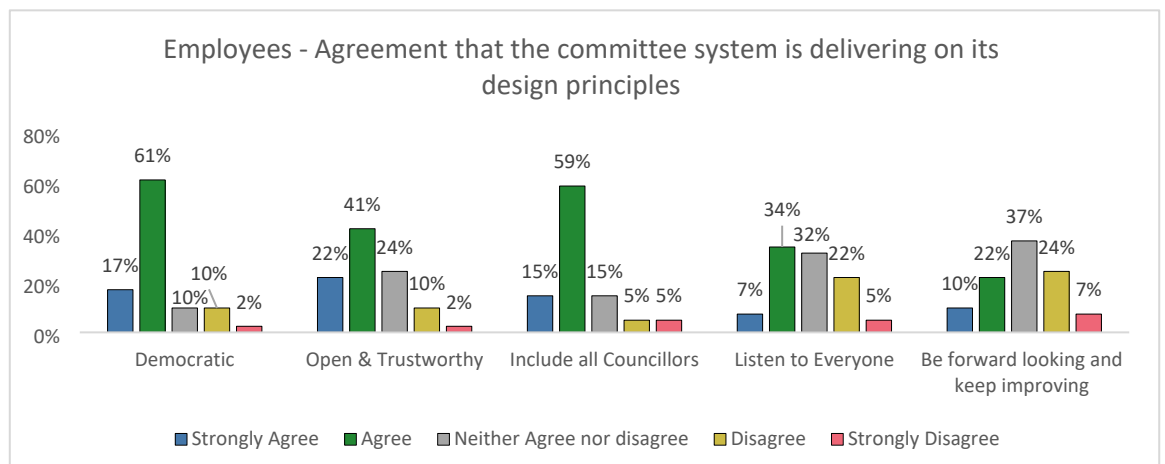
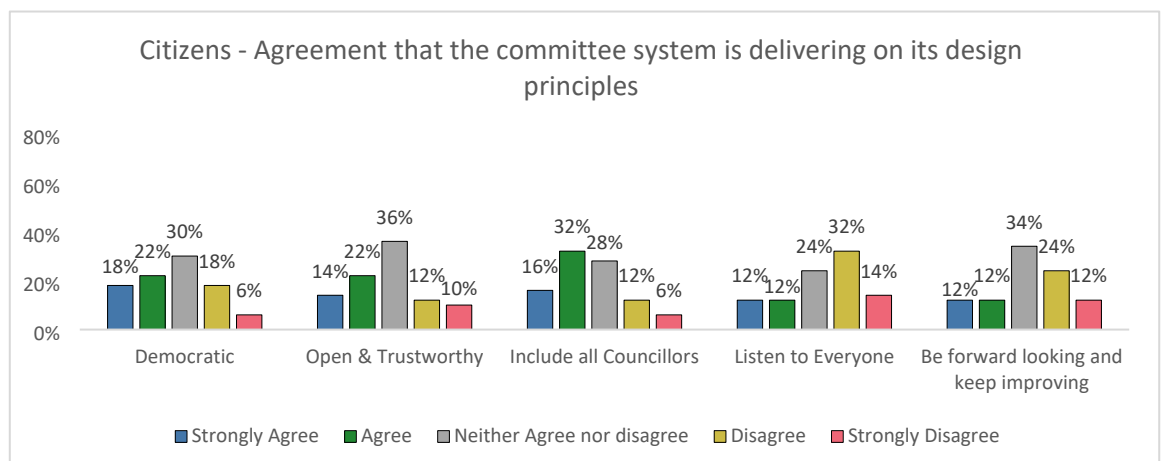
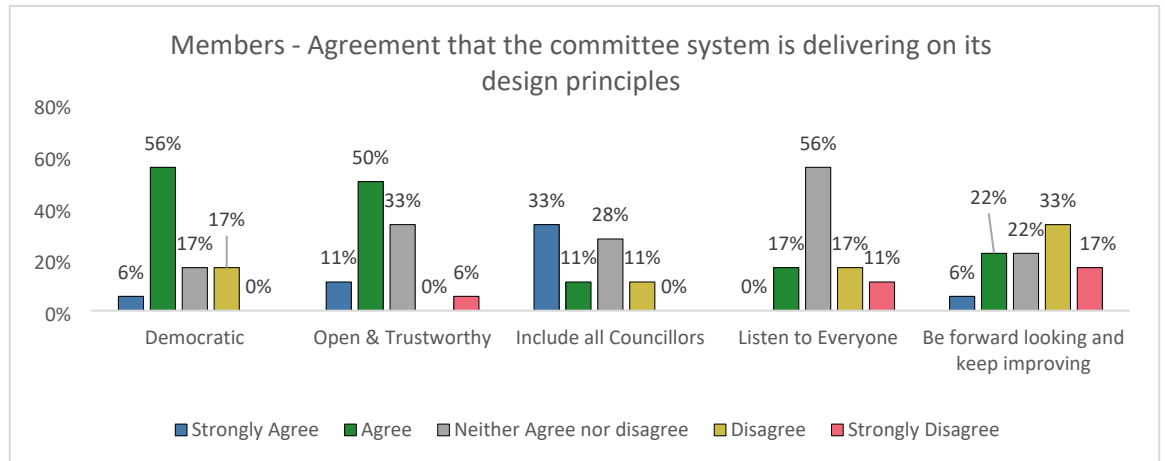
A key message to come through conversations with Members was that cross-party working is working well in the new system, recognising that this may be aided by the Council being in 'no overall control.' There was a recognition that the system is still in its early days and that we are still learning and bedding in.

Officers have found it positive to have input from, and engage with a wider group of members through committees, although some have found the new system more complex to navigate – particularly the informal briefings which previously would have involved one cabinet member.

The results from the survey around whether the new system has delivered on our key design principles to be democratic, open and trustworthy, include all Councillors, listen to everyone and be forward looking and keep improving are mixed – and difficult to draw meaningful conclusions from. Officers are more

likely to agree or strongly agree that the new system is delivering on the key design principles than citizens or members.

In terms of being forward looking and keep improving, Governance Committee is keen that the review identifies mechanisms for continuous improvement beyond the review itself.



Proposed Issues for Action Planning Phase

Consider mechanisms for continuous improvement of our governance arrangements.

3.9 Are Policy Committees undertaking the type of activities pertaining to policy and decision making that they intended to do?

Of Members who responded to the survey, 61% think that committees are not doing enough policy development work, and 56% think they are not doing enough pre-decision scrutiny and evaluation.

Members and officers told us that there have not been enough opportunities for early policy development work, and use of workshops, working groups and task and finish groups – limiting the ability for committee's to meaningfully engage with citizens and stakeholders. One political group submission suggested that Policy Committee meetings should meet monthly to create space for policy development work, alternating between formal business and policy development.

Members and officers told us that work programmes feel officer led, and that we need to enable Members to shape the work programme and find space to carry out work on policy priorities

Proposed Issues for Action Planning Phase:

- Consider how we can create capacity in the system for Policy Committees to undertake more policy development and pre-decision scrutiny.
- Develop a partnership approach to work programming with Members and officers, that results in balanced programme of decision making, policy development and scrutiny and evaluation.

3.10 Are Local Area Committees and Policy Committees working well together? Is there anything that could be improved?

The results from the survey suggest that there is a lack of clarity around the relationship between LACs and Policy Committees, with 50% of members, 56% of officers and 44% of citizens saying that remits of LACs and Policy Committees is not clear; and 67% of Members, 80% of officers and 66% of citizens saying that it is not clear how and when matters can be referred between LACs and Policy Committees.

Members and officers told us that this lack of clarity means that issues can be 'bounced' between committees, which is frustrating for all.

Some citizens and Members feel that some decisions currently being taken by Policy Committees would be more appropriately taken by LACs, and would free up policy committee capacity.

Proposed Issues for Action Planning Phase:

- Consider whether we need to develop a clearer framework on the balance of decisions between Policy Committees and LACs.
- Develop clearer guidance and communications on the roles of LACs and Policy Committees, describing the process for referring issues between them.

Citizen & Community Engagement and Formal Participation**3.11 What is working well in terms of engagement for the public and are there any gaps?**

Public engagement is the area that people feel we've made least progress on as part of the transition to the Committee System. Of those who responded to the survey, only 17% of Members, 24% of citizens and 41% of officers agree or strongly agree we are delivering the design principle of 'Listening to Everyone'.

We heard some examples of engagement working well – Business Advisor involvement in Economic Development and Skills Committee discussions, and the Co-opted HealthWatch member on the Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee feeding in views from diverse communities – but feedback from Members indicates that the 'Engagement Toolkit', introduced as part of the transition, is not being used.

Members and officers told us that there have not been enough opportunities for policy development work and 'task and finish groups' in the new system – which is where early engagement with citizens and stakeholders can add most value. Citizen survey responses suggest that many people don't feel connected to, or aware of, Policy Committees and their work, and those that do find it difficult to know how to navigate the system and influence decisions.

Officers and citizens questioned whether there is adequate support, resource and expertise for engagement within the Council. As part of the transition to the Committee System, the Council started working with an organisation called 'Involve' to improve how the whole Council engages across the board and this is more fundamental to SCC's ambitions for community involvement and engagement and the quality and consistency of practice across SCC. As discussed previously with Governance Committee, this needs to be progressed by SCC but progress has been constrained by SCC capacity and not through any fault of Involve.

Proposed Issues for Action Planning Phase:

- Consider how we can create capacity in the system for Committees to undertake policy development work, making use of the 'Engagement Toolkit'.
- Consider how we can make it easier for citizens to know what is happening in Policy Committees and how they can get involved.
- Consider how we will address the recommendations from the 'Involve' report.

3.12 What is the volume and nature of public questions?

Between May and December 2022, 67 public questions were asked and 13 petitions were presented. The distribution of public questions across Committees is uneven, with Adult Health and Social Care, and Education, Children and Families Policy Committees receiving none.

3.13 How effective are we at responding to questions and petitions?

Of those who responded to the survey, 44% of citizens were either dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied with speed of their response to a public question, and 56% were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the manner of the response received.

There is a sense that public questions are not always directed to the most appropriate forum, there is duplication of questions at Policy Committees, Full Council and LACs, and sometimes questions are 'bounced' between committees – causing confusion and delays to responses. Public Questions to LACs are not triaged centrally, so there is the potential for duplication and inconsistent responses where questions are asked at multiple committees.

Some Members felt that the process in place for responding to questions – with responses formulated by officers and the Chair, is not appropriate in the new system, where the question is addressed to the Committee.

Some citizens felt that 30 minutes is inadequate for dealing with public questions when significant decisions are being made; some felt the process is too formal and rigid, there is no scope for asking supplementary questions, and isn't a meaningful tool for engagement and influencing decision making. Some citizens would like to be able to submit questions anonymously or attend the meeting virtually to ask a question. Some citizens were concerned that where written responses are provided, they are not published with the minutes, so they are not on the public record.

Issues for Action Planning Phase:

- Ensure the process for asking public questions is clear, that citizens are directed to the most appropriate forum and that those forums are easy to access.
- Review the process for responding to public questions, to ensure it is fit for purpose in a Committee System

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, Communication & Information Availability.

3.14 How well are we mitigating the risks identified in the Equalities Impact Assessment?

Wellbeing – Of the officers and Members that responded to the survey, 34% of officers and 22% of Members reported that their wellbeing had deteriorated in the Committee system. Feedback from officers and Members indicates that for

some, the increased workload, time commitments and pressure around deadlines has increased stress and impacted wellbeing.

Some Members have expressed concern that time commitment required – particularly for Members with lead roles, or multiple roles, will disproportionately affect those with caring and work responsibilities and deter some people from standing for election.

Quality, accessibility and timely publication of reports is important in ensuring Members and citizens are able to appropriately engage with policy committees – and can have a greater impact on those with accessibility requirements.

Equality Impact Assessments - there is a lack of consistency in EIAs being attached to Committee reports. This varies by committee from 71% of Waste and Streetscene Policy Committee papers having the cited EIAs attached, to 6% at Finance Sub-Committee.

Proposed Issues for Action Planning Phase:

- Consider how we can improve the quality of reports to Policy Committees, including accessibility, and timely publication.
- Ensure the Equality Impact Assessment process is robust, transparent, and applied consistently.
- Ensure Members and Officers are signposted to wellbeing support services that are available through the Council.

3.15 How accessible are the Policy Committees and their outputs?

Of citizens who responded to the survey, 42% said that Policy Committees aren't always held in locations and at times that accommodate their needs. Some people said that formal meetings could be an intimidating forum to attend, and several citizens suggested hybrid/virtual options for attending formal meetings to increase access.

Webcasting of meetings has made observing Policy Committee meetings more accessible – meetings between June and the end of November 2022 had an average of 74 webcast views, with the minimum being 11, and the maximum being 164.

20% of citizens who responded to the survey said the format papers are published in is not accessible to them, and several citizens said that Policy Committee reports are often too long, and use inaccessible language. We analysed 8 Policy Committee reports for reading ease using the Flesch Readability Scale (which measures readability based on average sentence length and average syllables per word – where 100 is the most accessible). The results ranged from 27 to 37.7.

Several citizens mentioned that it was hard to find information about Policy Committees and their meetings on the Sheffield City Council website, although 42% of citizen respondents knew where to find published draft minutes and webcasts on the website.

Issues for Action Planning Phase:

- Consider how we can improve the accessibility and readability of reports to policy committees, and ensure they are published in a timely and accessible way.
- Consider how we can make it easier for citizens to a) know what is happening in Policy Committees and b) get involved.

4 Full Council

The operation of Full Council was not included in the scope of the review, however during our engagement we received submissions relevant to it.

One political group submission suggested that Full Council should be held every other month, at a fixed date and time on the 1st Wednesday of the month (except the AGM) – May, July, September, November, December, Feb, March/Budget; and that minutes of Committee meetings should come to Full Council in place of Members Questions.

One political group submission suggested that the overall number of council meetings should stay at 6 plus AGM plus Budget; the order of the agenda should be changed to move business items up; longer time limits for important items; Members Questions to continue at Full Council, but also introduced at Policy Committee meetings; that whether electronic voting is required on so many votes; and that voting in parts is kept as an option.

There is currently a parallel piece of work being carried out by the Whips on the operation of Full Council. The information we received as part of the 6 month review will be passed to the relevant officers to inform the work on Full Council.

5 PROPOSED ACTION PLANNING PHASE

5.1 Issues and next steps

The proposed issues for the 'Action Planning Phase' of the review, highlighted in section 4, fall into 3 broad categories:

- 1) Those that would require a **change** to the system, or how we work within the system. These issues would require consideration by Governance Committee and recommendations to Full Council to change the Constitution, processes or procedures. We are proposing that these issues are taken forward to Action Planning workshops, where Governance Committee will develop recommendations for its final report to full council.

- 2) Those that require us to **improve** the way we explain, communicate and support the system – both externally to citizens, and internally to officers and members. We are proposing that Governance Committee asks Officers to begin to work on these issues immediately, reporting back to Governance Committee on progress at an appropriate time.

- 3) Those that relate to the **wider system**, beyond the scope of the review. Governance Committee is asked to consider these, and make suggestions as to how they could be most appropriately taken forwards.

The proposed actions are set out in Appendix 1. Governance Committee is asked to consider whether these are the right actions, whether there are any gaps, and agree to take the identified actions forwards as outlined above.

6. RISK ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 This report sets out the findings from the Engagement Phase of the review, and proposes the next steps in the review process. Equality, Financial & Commercial, Legal and Climate implications of recommendations arising from the action planning phase of the review will be included in future reports to the Committee.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Governance Committee is asked to:

- Consider and note the findings from the Engagement Phase of the review.
- Note that findings related to Full Council have been passed to the Full Council working group for consideration as part of their work.
- Consider whether the issues identified for the Action Planning Phase of the Review are the right ones and;
 - Agree that those requiring a change to the system are taken forward to Governance Committee Action Planning Workshops
 - Agree that those requiring improvements to how we explain, communicate and support the system are actioned by officers, with progress reports back to Governance Committee at the appropriate time
 - Identify which issues can be actioned prior to the Council's AGM in May 2023, and which will be actioned in the longer term
 - Consider how issues relating to the wider system, beyond the scope of this review are taken forwards.

Appendix 1 – Proposed Actions

Require change – For Governance Committee Consideration

Decision Making and Delegation

1. Consider whether current delegations are appropriate and enabling Policy Committees to focus on the right issues
2. Consider whether current delegations are appropriate in relation to transport and highways issues.
3. Consider whether changes are needed in relation to where decisions on Licensing Policy are taken.
4. Consider whether current Committee remits are appropriately balanced
5. Consider options around ‘call-in’ of decisions
6. Consider Deputy Leader membership and substitutions for Strategy and Resources Policy Committee.
7. Consider whether the current process for cross cutting issues could be improved

Roles and Responsibilities

1. Develop clearer definition and expectation of the Co-Chair role
2. Follow up remuneration issues around Group Spokespeople and Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee Chair.

Meetings & Briefings

1. Consider the meeting cycle and schedule
2. Establish a consistent set of expectations around briefings, including who should be involved, how often they should happen, the role of group briefings and how they interact with pre-agenda and pre-meetings.

Committee Activity

1. Consider how we can create capacity in the system for Policy Committees to undertake more policy development and pre-decision scrutiny
2. Develop a partnership approach to work programming with members and officers, that results in balanced programme of decision making, policy development and scrutiny and evaluation.

Public Questions

1. Ensure the process for asking public questions is clear, that citizens are directed to the most appropriate forum and that those forums are easy to access.
2. Review the process for responding to public questions, to ensure it is fit for purpose in a Committee System

Continuous Improvement

1. Consider mechanisms for continuous improvement of our governance arrangements.

Require Improvement- For Officer Action

Improving how we explain the system

1. Consider how we can make it easier for citizens to know what is happening in Policy Committees and how they can get involved.
2. Ensure the process for asking public questions is clear, that citizens are directed to the most appropriate forum and that those forums are easy to access.
3. Consider how we provide officers with clear and consistent advice about how to navigate decisions through the Committee System – particularly when they are ‘cross-cutting’ issues
4. Develop clearer guidance on the roles and responsibilities for Chairs, Co-Chairs, Deputy Chairs and Group Spokespeople and how officers are expected to brief and interact with these roles.

Improving the support we provide to those working in the system

Advice, Guidance and Support

1. Develop mechanisms for Portfolio Officers to share best practise in resourcing and working in the Committee System
2. Consider how we can provide officers with ‘quick wins’ in terms of tools and support.
3. Ensure Members and Officers are signposted to wellbeing support services that are available through the Council.

Effective and timely reports

1. Consider how we can help officers to better understand the process for getting a Committee report prepared, signed off and published in a timely way.
2. Develop training for officers on effective, accessible report writing
3. Consider how we can develop training to improve the quality of reports to Policy Committees, including effectiveness, accessibility, readability and timely publication.
4. Ensure the Equality Impact Assessment process is robust, transparent, and applied consistently.

Requires further work beyond this review

- Consider whether we need to develop a clearer framework on the balance of decisions between Policy Committees and LACs.
- Consider how we will address the recommendations from the 'Involve' report.

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