

# **Governance Committee**

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**Thursday 14 December 2023 at 2.00 pm**

**Town Hall, Sheffield, S1 2HH**

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

## **Membership**

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Councillor Fran Belbin  
Councillor Sue Alston  
Councillor Simon Clement-  
Jones  
Councillor Mike Levery  
Councillor Minesh Parekh  
Councillor Sioned-Mair  
Richards  
Councillor Laura Moynahan  
Councillor Paul Turpin  
Councillor Garry Weatherall

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## PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE MEETING

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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](http://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.

If you require any further information please contact Jay Bell email [jay.bell@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:jay.bell@sheffield.gov.uk)

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**GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE AGENDA  
14 DECEMBER 2023**

**Order of Business**

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- 1. Welcome and Housekeeping Arrangements**
- 2. Apologies for Absence**
- 3. Exclusion of Public and Press**  
To identify items where resolutions may be moved to exclude the press and public.
- 4. Declarations of Interest** (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 - 18)  
To approve the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 22 November 2023
- 6. Public Questions and Petitions**  
To receive any questions or petitions from members of the public.
- 7. Review of Policy Committee Remits** (Pages 19 - 26)  
Report of the Director of Policy and Democratic Engagement
- 8. Citizen Participation and Community Involvement - Identifying Member Leads** (Pages 27 - 32)  
Report of the Director of Policy and Democratic Engagement
- 9. Update on Review of Council's Approach to Public Questions** (Pages 33 - 36)  
Report of The Head of Policy and Partnerships
- 10. Work Programme** (Pages 37 - 50)  
Report of The Head of Policy and Partnerships
- 11. Date of Next Meeting**  
The next meeting of the Committee will be held on 17 January 2024

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## ADVICE TO MEMBERS ON DECLARING INTERESTS AT MEETINGS

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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, General Counsel by emailing [david.hollis@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:david.hollis@sheffield.gov.uk).

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Governance Committee

Meeting held 22 November 2023

**PRESENT:** Councillors Fran Belbin (Chair), Sue Alston (Deputy Chair), Simon Clement-Jones, Mike Levery, Minesh Parekh, Sioned-Mair Richards, Laura Moynahan, Paul Turpin and Dianne Hurst (Substitute Member)

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

1.1 An apology for absence was received from Councillor Garry Weatherall. Councillor Dianne Hurst attended as his substitute.

**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 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 12 October 2023, were agreed as an accurate record.

4.2 The Chair (Councillor Fran Belbin) referred to the minutes in which it was previously agreed that the Council would publish the interim paper from Sheffield Oversight and Scrutiny once a finalised version was received. The Chair confirmed that this paper had now been received therefore it would be published following the meeting.

**5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS**

5.1 The Committee received four public questions from Ruth Hubbard prior to the meeting. Due to the questioner not being present at the meeting, the Chair read the questions and gave responses as follows.

5.2 **Ruth Hubbard**

In its meeting on July 20th this Committee committed to writing to those involved in the original roundtable discussions held by Involve with an update and

apology for the near two-year delay in feeding anything back to them (and given the commitment made to circulate the final draft report for comments prior to publication). No such letter appears to have gone out (and nor has the final draft been circulated as promised). This is despite the report itself emphasising the importance of feedback loops several times. I'm sure almost all of those who attended the roundtables will not realise the report is even finally out. Why didn't the letter go out that this committee committed to in July and what will be done to rectify this and the broken commitment to circulate the final draft for comment?

The Chair explained that the Committee did agree to do this and apologised that this has not happened. It was not intentional, and we recognised that in building trust and involving communities, we have to do the things that we say we are going to do, especially where citizens have given their time to contribute to important work like this. As we have found through the work on Public Questions, we need a better approach in place for tracking both the responses to questions and any actions agreed. We wanted to get the draft version of the report into the public domain given the amount of time that has passed so that it can provide a platform to set the direction that we need to take as a council. If the Committee supported the recommendations in the report, the final draft of the report will go to a future S&R (Strategy & Resources Policy Committee) meeting. Ahead of that, we will write to participants and contributors (includes citizens, stakeholders and SCC staff), inviting comments and thoughts which will then form part of the S&R report.

The original amount budgeted for the Involve work was in the region of £80k and presumably all, or a fair bit of this, was spent. Given the in-Sheffield expertise and knowledge in this area and across a whole range of groups and organisations I regret that considerable monies have been spent that could have benefitted Sheffield groups or organisations and that would have resulted in similar or, I believe, better and more tailored, work. But what the use of an outside organisation also contributes to is a longstanding situation where citizens and stakeholders continue to get nowhere near helping shape key governance strategies and approaches that affect them - this is simply blocked or deflected and the council and this committee continues to do its own thing. Does this all change now in light of what this report says about how things should proceed - both in terms of vision and strategy development, and in terms of ensuring that participation must be demonstrated to have impact and influence in decision-making (and that some of us have been saying for many years)?

The Chair explained that the draft report and the insight that Involve and contributors have provided has been important in starting to shape the direction that we need to take as an organisation. The recommendations are authoritative, resonate with other independent reviews (eg. LGA Peer Challenge; Lowcock Report) but provide practical steps which we have already started using the content with staff on the development of our Future Sheffield programme. There is a real opportunity to use the weight of insight and expertise in the report to shape the work we need to do

with citizens and stakeholders to transform our approach. As we have seen from the work that the Sheffield Oversight and Scrutiny group have undertaken to complement the work of Governance Committee on public questions, we have some real expertise within Sheffield which can make a positive contribution to improving local democracy and citizen participation. Pending the support of this Committee, the next phases of this work will be led by S&R. While that might need the commissioning of external support, we are open to that support coming from within the city and I am personally very open to involving external partners in both the commissioning and the design of the next phase of work.

There's a clear steer in the Involve report that external partners don't just want to contribute to the Council's agenda, but to influence and set agendas and if we want to become a community-powered Council we should welcome that.

In referring on to Strategy and Resources Policy Committee will the Governance Committee request that both appropriate constitutional additions or amendments, as well as suitable performance indicators towards clear outcomes, are developed at the appropriate time? This will help ensure that participation and its impact is visible and embedded in underpinning council governance arrangements and operationalised in approaches and procedures, as well as ensuring that improvements and progress can be demonstrated?

The Chair welcomed the suggested approaches and Governance Committee may want to comment and consider these as part of the recommendations to S&R Committee.

For me, the report lacks some clarity in a whole range of areas and this is perhaps indicative of a lot of things, not least that it is laying out a lot of territory. But this also suggests a fair bit of thinking and development work needs undertaking over time, albeit long overdue. When interested parties and stakeholders become aware of the report is there anything the Governance Committee thinks they might usefully look to do?

The Chair agreed that there were lots to do, some of it practical, particularly increasing the skills and capabilities of our teams, supporting the learning and development of Members, taking opportunities to trial and pilot new approaches and importantly, working with citizens to build an ambitious vision for where we want to be. Internally, we're already taking some steps – eg. creating a Community of Practice to develop and share practice expertise across our teams, learning from and using new approaches (eg. All Age Autism work, City Goals). But we need to make this part of our strategic direction as a council and that is the rationale for the recommendation to S&R Committee and as part of that, Governance Committee may wish to encourage S&R Committee to involve citizens and stakeholders in taking forward the Involve recommendations.

## **6. CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT: NEXT STEPS**

- 6.1 The Committee received a report of the Director of Policy and Democratic Engagement. The Head of Policy and Partnerships (Laurie Brennan) presented the report.
- 6.2 The Head of Policy and Partnerships thanked Ruth Hubbard for submitting the public questions and helping the Committee focus on the next steps.
- 6.3 The Head of Policy and Partnerships explained that this piece of work began during the transition to committees' period and that it was going to be a large piece of work that took place over a long period of time. The Council consulted with community groups and members of the public in regard to community participation, to understand what strengths and good practice they thought the Council already had, and to identify key areas of weakness that needed to be addressed and improved. The Head of Policy and Partnerships confirmed this piece of work had already begun and also mentioned how it was in alignment with the Lowcock report, LGA (Local Government Association) Peer Review and Race Equality Commission report.
- 6.4 The Head of Policy and Partnerships explained that the report highlighted some examples of when the Council had demonstrated good practice in relation to community engagement. He mentioned how citizens explained that their experience was inconsistent across the organisation therefore this had been incorporated into the Council's vision going forward.
- 6.5 The Head of Policy and Partnerships referred to the recommendations, in which it was recommended that Strategy & Resources Policy Committee (S&R) added citizen participation to its work programme. He explained that this was not to move work from the Governance Committee to S&R but due to S&R strategically leading the organisation's agenda, whilst working with other committees.
- 6.6 Members of the Committee asked questions, and made comments and observations, as summarised below:
- 6.7 A Member of the Committee welcomed the report and the citizen engagement approach. They mentioned how local residents were being consulted in co-designing playgrounds for their local area therefore this approach could be used for that process.

The Head of Policy and Partnerships mentioned how this was positive and that this approach should not take years to impact citizens. The Council should harness the capacity of Policy Committees, Local Area Committees and the activity that Councillors undertake in their wards. He added that there needed to be Member and Officer ambassadors that people could consult with prior to undertaking engagement so that

the approach was clear and consistent across the organisation.

- 6.8 A Member of the Committee thanked everyone for their involvement on the report. They explained how good practice should not be dismissed, although stated that areas of weakness needed to be improved. They mentioned that the emphasis was on early consultation and how important the pre-decision scrutiny would be, for example, who and how can the Council consult with citizens. The Member stated that the Committee discussed at a previous workshop that the culture needed to change and still believed this was the important part to consider. They referred to the Policy Committee toolkit, which was introduced following the transition to committee system, and wondered how often that was being used. They added that it was important to consult with those who do not already actively consult with the Council. They suggested that when a decision was to be made at a Policy Committee, that roundtable discussions at Local Area Committees took place prior to that. The Member of the Committee referred to the recommendations, they explained that this piece of work should remain as part of the work of Governance Committee, rather than referring it to S&R. They did not believe that referring large or controversial decisions to S&R was in the spirit of the referendum and the transition to the committee system.

The Head of Policy and Partnerships referred to the engagement toolkit and mentioned how this was introduced to help guide Members and Officers in a new unfamiliar committee system. He stated that this could be enhanced as part of the member development work and mentioned how Officers could take advantage of the opportunities as part of pre-agenda planning and meetings to embed that early citizen engagement.

- 6.9 A Member of the Committee referred to two previous occasions in which citizens were consulted on schemes in their local areas, but were disappointed with the outcomes. Although that consultation was carried out, it did not result in the favour of those local people affected and they therefore believed there were some lessons to be learnt from those experiences. They explained that there was also a time when a survey was carried out by the Friends of Norfolk Park Community Group in which some very useful data was collected and shared with the Parks and Countryside Service therefore that was an occasion where good consultation and collaboration with citizens took place.
- 6.10 The Chair explained that she had previously spoken with the Transport department and that she was due to speak with Parks & Countryside Service regarding piloting this approach in the near future.
- 6.11 A Member of the Committee mentioned that the Governance Committee should retain this piece of work rather than referring it to S&R, even if it meant that additional resources needed to be

considered.

- 6.12 A Member of the Committee mentioned that the Committee could consider that there might be a local priority for Sheffield based consultants, to build on knowledge and expertise.

The Head of Policy and Partnerships agreed that the public question from Ruth Hubbard was right regarding the potential to commission locally based organisations and that there were real expertise and knowledge in the city with existing connections to the communities therefore the Council needed to consider how to best use this resource.

- 6.13 A Member of the Committee referred to the Governance Committee's terms of reference and therefore believed the Committee should continue to see this piece of work through. They stated that too many decisions were being referred to S&R, although they should remain at the appropriate committees.

- 6.14 A Member of the Committee also raised concerns around the recommendation to S&R. They mentioned that S&R did have a role in this work, although this should remain as part of the work carried out by the Governance Committee.

- 6.15 A Member of the Committee referred to the recent decision made regarding road safety measures being removed and how the voices of young people were not captured enough in that process.

They stated that, although discussions were being captured, in minutes, such as Local Area Committee minutes, they were not being captured in minutes of Policy Committee meetings.

They referred to the suggestion in the report around Members meeting with citizens to see how views varied, and mentioned how this was about Members taking ownership and building back trust.

- 6.16 The Chair mentioned that a greater level of involvement needed to be carried out when the Council was making decisions that affected citizens' behaviours. Citizens needed to be a part of the process so the Council could ensure the decisions were successful. The Chair agreed that Local Area Committees could play a key role in consultation at early stages of a decision.

- 6.17 The Chair moved to the recommendations in the report. There were three recommendations put forward to the Committee as follows.

That the Governance Committee:

1. note and discuss the findings and recommendations in the draft report by Involve that was developed with citizens, stakeholders

and our staff.

2. refer the draft report by Involve and any comments and perspectives from Governance Committee to the Strategy and Resources Committee, proposing that:
  - the development of citizen participation is included in the S&R workplan;
  - the S&R Committee use the draft Involve report together with the views of this Committee to lead the commissioning of activity in response to the recommendations; and
  - the S&R Committee work with other Policy Committees and Local Area Committees (LACs) to identify opportunities for pilots and demonstrator projects for citizen involvement and participation.
3. agree to revise the Governance Committee's workplan, recognising that the transformation of community involvement and citizen participation must be core to the City Council's strategic development and is best led by the S&R Committee. This will enable Governance Committee to focus capacity on the review of Committee Remits (in line with the Six-Month Review).

6.18 On being put to the vote, Recommendation 1 was carried.

6.19 The Chair proposed an additional recommendation that the Committee sent the Involve report to the citizens involved in the workshops and to thank them for their contributions and to encourage them to feed their views back on the report so that it can be fed into this work as it goes forward and with the aim to continuously involve them from this point on.

This recommendation was carried.

6.20 The General Counsel (David Hollis) explained that the Governance Committee was not a Policy Committee and remit was not to implement policies like Policy Committees could. He stated that the Committee's role was advisory and it could advise on constitutional changes to Full Council. He mentioned that the engagement work discussed at this meeting would go beyond constitution and governance as it operationally needed to be embedded across the organisation. Therefore, the recommendation was to S&R as the appropriate body for approving this. He added that S&R approved its work programme with each Member of S&R having a vote.

6.21 A Member of the Committee said that they did not believe that

Members of S&R, would not have the capacity to undertake this piece of work.

6.22 The Chair mentioned that as this was about changing culture and engaging widely with citizens, which was a cross council issue, and that it should be referred to S&R. She added that as part of the recommendation, S&R would be commissioning a body to lead on this and therefore believed they would have the capacity to carry out this work.

6.23 A Member of the Committee mentioned that they would be supporting the recommendation to refer citizen participation to S&R as they believed that Committee would have the most influence on other committees taking ownership of engagement.

6.24 Councillor Sue Alston proposed a recommendation that this Committee “moved to set up a schedule of workshops to start the discussions and work on this report, and engages widely with outside communities and brings regular updates to this Committee and reports the outcomes of its discussions to Full Council or S&R.”

Councillor Paul Turpin proposed an amendment to the proposal to include ‘and to make recommendations including the commissioning of activity to S&R or Full Council as appropriate.’

On being put to the vote, the Committee agreed the amendment and then further agreed the recommendation as amended. The effect of the changes were that the original recommendations 2 and 3 as outlined in the report were lost.

6.25 RESOLVED: That the Governance Committee:

1. notes and discuss the findings and recommendations in the draft report by Involve that was developed with citizens, stakeholders and our staff;
2. sends the Involve report to the citizens involved in the workshops and to thank them for their contributions and to encourage them to feed their views back on the report so that it can be fed into this work as it goes forward and with the aim to continuously involve them from this point on; and
3. moves to set up a schedule of workshops to start the discussions and work on this report, and engages widely with outside communities and brings regular updates to this Committee and reports the outcomes of its discussions to Full Council or S&R and makes recommendations including the commissioning of activity to S&R or Full Council as appropriate.

## 7. WORK PLAN

7.1 The Committee considered a report of the Head of Policy and Partnerships concerning its work programme.

7.2 The Policy and Improvement Officer (Alice Nicholson) gave an update on the programme and highlighted the key areas for Members attention. She referred to upcoming items on the programme and explained when these would likely be presented at Committee.

7.3 Members of the Committee made comments and suggestions relating to the work programme, as follows:

7.4 A Member of the Committee asked what the process was for including additional items to the programme, in between meetings.

The Policy and Improvement Officer explained that no additional items had been included on the programme since the Governance Committee last met.

7.5 The Head of Policy and Partnerships suggested that the item on the programme relating to Committee Remits be brought to the December Committee.

7.6 A Member of the Committee proposed an item to be included on the programme, to look at amending the constitution to allow Co-Leaders and Co-Deputy Leaders.

Members of the Committee mentioned how there was already large amounts of work to be carried out on the programme and therefore was not against discussing the proposed item but believed there were more urgent items to consider.

On being put to the vote, this proposal was lost.

7.7 **RESOLVED:** That:

- (a) the Committee's work programme, as set out in Appendix 1 be agreed, including any additions and amendments identified in Part 1;
- (b) the comments and suggestions by Members of the Committee be noted and taken into account and adjustments made to the work programme as appropriate; and
- (c) the additional indications of items which are likely to need more intensive work (e.g. citizen involvement, task and

finish groups, policy review and development work) be noted together with the implications for prioritisation of Governance Committee's forward workplan.

**8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

- 8.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee was scheduled to take place on 14 December 2023.



## Report to Governance Committee

### Author/Lead Officer of Report:

Laurie Brennan, Head of Policy & Partnerships

Tel: 0114 2734755

**Report of:** Director of Policy and Democratic Engagement  
**Report to:** Governance Committee  
**Date of Decision:** 14<sup>th</sup> December 2023  
**Subject:** Review of Policy Committee Remits

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?				
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 paper proposes an initial scope and approach to undertaking a review of Policy Committee remits in line with the recommendations of the Six Month Review of New Governance Arrangements that was approved by Full Council in May 2023.

It is proposed that Governance Committee establish a new task and finish group which will start meeting in January 2024 lead the review over the course of 2024.

### Recommendations:

That Governance Committee:

1. Discuss and agree the initial scope for the review of Policy Committee remits in line with the recommendations of the Six Month Review of Governance Arrangements
2. Agree to establish a dedicated Task and Finish Group to lead the review of Policy Committee remits from January 2024
3. Agree the composition of the proposed Task and Finish Group

4. Agree to receive regular progress reports and developing propositions from the Task and Finish group over the course of the review.

**Background Papers:**

Six Month Review of New Governance Arrangements,

<https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/documents/b27181/Item%207%20-%20Six%20Month%20Review%20of%20Governance%20Arrangements%20-%20report%20Wednesday%2017-May-2023%2011.30%20Council.pdf?T=9>

Lead Officer to complete:-					
1	<p>I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed, where required.</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Finance: Matthew Ardern, Senior Finance Manager</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Legal: David Hollis, General Counsel</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Equalities &amp; Consultation: Ed Sexton, Senior Equalities and Engagement Officer</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Climate: Laura Ellendale,</td> </tr> </table>	Finance: Matthew Ardern, Senior Finance Manager	Legal: David Hollis, General Counsel	Equalities & Consultation: Ed Sexton, Senior Equalities and Engagement Officer	Climate: Laura Ellendale,
Finance: Matthew Ardern, Senior Finance Manager					
Legal: David Hollis, General Counsel					
Equalities & Consultation: Ed Sexton, Senior Equalities and Engagement Officer					
Climate: Laura Ellendale,					
	<i>Legal, financial/commercial and equalities implications must be included within the report and the name of the officer consulted must be included above.</i>				
2	<p><b>SLB member who approved submission:</b></p> <p>James Henderson, Director of Policy and Democratic Engagement</p>				
3	<p><b>Committee Chair consulted:</b></p> <p>Cllr. Fran Belbin, Chair of Governance Committee</p>				
4	<p>I confirm that all necessary approval has been obtained in respect of the implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist and that the report has been approved for submission to the Committee by the SLB member indicated at 2. In addition, any additional forms have been completed and signed off as required at 1.</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td><b>Lead Officer Name:</b> Laurie Brennan</td> <td><b>Job Title:</b> Head of Policy and Partnerships</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2"><b>Date:</b> 6<sup>th</sup> December 2023</td> </tr> </table>	<b>Lead Officer Name:</b> Laurie Brennan	<b>Job Title:</b> Head of Policy and Partnerships	<b>Date:</b> 6 <sup>th</sup> December 2023	
<b>Lead Officer Name:</b> Laurie Brennan	<b>Job Title:</b> Head of Policy and Partnerships				
<b>Date:</b> 6 <sup>th</sup> December 2023					

# Review of Policy Committee Remits

## 1. Purpose

- 1.1 This paper sets out a proposed approach to the review of the remits of the Policy Committee in Sheffield City Council's committee system. The review responds to a commitment made in the Six Month Review of Governance Arrangements to undertake a review of remits in 2023/24.
- 1.2 The proposal suggests an initial scope for the review, including key issues to explore and options for how the Governance Committee may want to work.

## 2. Holistic review of Committee Remits – suggested scope

- 2.1 In May 2022, Sheffield City Council implemented a modern committee system of governance following a referendum in May 2021. This included establishing a number of Policy Committees to discharge the functions delegated to them by Full Council (as set out in Part 3 of the Constitution<sup>1</sup>). While the current policy committees are largely aligned to broad functions of the Council, the responsibilities of the Policy Committees fall into three key areas:

- Policy development
- Decision making
- Policy review

- 2.2 To support the continuous improvement of our new committee system, the Governance Committee was asked to undertake a Six Month Review of Governance<sup>2</sup>, in 2022/23. In the Review, the Governance Committee made a series of recommendations and agreed a number of officer actions which have been progressed during the 2023/24 municipal year. However, apart from some specific amendments (eg. to remit of Education, Children and Families Committee), the Committee recognised that with the Committee System in relative infancy, it was minded to enable the Policy Committees to bed-in further before evaluating the effectiveness policy responsibilities across the system.

- 2.3 The Six Month Review report stated:

“Governance Committee will take a holistic approach to reviewing Committee remits over 2023/24, taking into account the impact of this review’s

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<sup>1</sup> Sheffield City Council (2023) *Constitution* (Sept 2023), <https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/documents/s64413/Part%203C%20-%203.3%20Matters%20Delegated%20to%20Committees%20Sept%202023.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Sheffield City Council (2023) *Six Month Review of New Governance Arrangements*, <https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/documents/s58717/Appendix%201%20Report%20and%20Recommendations.pdf>

recommendations, any changes that may develop through the development of Local Area Committees and changes to the Council's management structure".

- 2.3 In line with the workplan agreed by Governance Committee, it is proposed that the Committee undertake the review of Policy Committee remits, starting in January 2024. Given that this is a holistic review, it is likely that the work will run beyond the 2023/24 municipal year although any early-stage recommendations from the work may be proposed to Full Council as part of the AGM in May to support the continuous improvement of the governance system.

Suggested initial key lines of enquiry

- 2.4 Learning from the insight and evidence provided by Members, officers and citizens as part of the Six-Month Review, it is proposed that the initial scope of the remits review focuses on a number of key areas:

- Workloads of each committee
- The number of times each committee has met
- Review the key responsibilities of the Policy Committees and considering whether they are being delivered effectively, specifically thinking about the following areas and the relative balance of focus given to each:
  - Policy review and scrutiny
  - Policy development
  - Decision making
- Alignment to the strategic context – including supporting the delivery of the new Council Plan and new Equalities Framework
- How cross-cutting matters have been managed and allocated, including leadership on equality, diversity and inclusion and responding to the climate emergency.
- The role of Finance Committee
- Any anomalies in remits – e.g. issues that have fallen between committees, gaps, areas that need greater clarity
- Whether the remits between committees should be changed
- The balance of decision making between LACs and policy committees and the relationships between LACs and policy committees

- 2.5 The scope will undoubtedly iterate as the review develops and Members may want to consider prioritising some areas to review first or starting with a broad assessment of the Policy Committees before focusing in on specific issues or themes which need more detailed analysis.

- 2.6 It is also suggested that the review makes full use of existing data and insight available about the Policy Committees. This includes insight and analysis

from the Six Month Review, including Member, citizen and officer insight into policy committees and data collected on operation of policy committees (eg. frequency, attendance, meeting length etc).

### 3. **Approach to undertaking the review**

3.1 It is proposed that Governance Committee establish a cross-party task and finish group to lead the remits review on behalf of the Governance Committee. This could be with a small group of Members from the Committee or Members may wish to operate as a full committee (as the Committee did in the Six Month Review of Governance), drawing on the whole Committee's expertise and sharing the workload.

3.2 Considering the scope of the review and potential duration, operating as a Task and Finish group with the full Committee involvement may ensure that we retain focus and a core group of Member involvement beyond the local elections and into the new municipal year.

3.3 The approach to undertaking the review is for the Members of the task and finish group to discuss and agree but it is recommended that the following should be considered:

- Analysis of existing evidence (eg. from the Six Month Review)
- Reflection on the original design principles for the Committee System and the Constitutional responsibilities of Policy Committee
- Involvement and engagement of citizens, Members and officers in the review, both in assessing the existing and in developing recommendations
- Views of strategic partners and external organisations – including business and city anchor institutions (eg. NHS) and delivery partners.

3.4 It is suggested that the new Task and Finish Group meet early in 2024 to agree ways of working and agree a detailed scope and workplan for the review which will then be presented at the next Governance Committee.

### 4. **How does this decision contribute?**

4.1 Undertaking the proposed review of Policy Committee remits delivers on the recommendations of the Six Month Review of Governance Arrangements as approved by Full Council in May 2023. It will ensure that our Policy Committees are undertaking their roles effectively and are able to lead key policy areas in line with the ambitions and strategic outcomes in the draft Council Plan.

- 4.2 The review will ensure that we support the continuous improvement of the committee system, recognising the need to learn from the experience of Members, officers and citizens in how the Policy Committees have functioned to date and considering how Policy Committees can best focus support the delivery of the draft Council Plan.

## 5. **Has there been any consultation?**

- 5.1 The Six Month Review included a period of engagement as part of the evidence gathering activity. This included Members, officer and some (although limited) citizen perspectives. It is suggested that the Committee's Task and Finish should draw on the insight from the Six Month Review but also look to undertake further engagement as part of the review.

This is for the Task and Finish Group to define as part of the scoping of the review.

## 6. **Risk analysis and implications of the decision**

### 6.1 Equality Implications

- 6.1.1 A full EIA was undertaken to inform the Transition to Committees work and the later Six Month Review of Governance. The EIA to date has focused on the accessibility and practicalities of Policy Committee meeting arrangements rather than the remit but the proposed remit review would provide an opportunity to consider any wider equality issues. There are other important insights from the Review of Governance which should be considered by the Task and Finish Group as part of the remit review.

- 6.1.2 The remit review should also consider the draft Equalities Framework and review how Policy Committees are undertaking their EDI duties as part of the scope.

### 6.2 Financial and Commercial Implications

- 6.2.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. The implications of any proposed changes to committee remits will be considered and any proposals put forward by the Governance Committee, where needed, must be costed prior to implementation.

### 6.3 Legal Implications

- 6.3.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report. The implications of any proposed changes to committee remits will be considered and any proposals put forward by the Governance Committee must be approved by Full Council as changes to the Constitution.

- 6.4 Climate Implications
- 6.4.1 There are no climate implications arising directly from this report and a CIA is not appropriate to be carried out at this stage, however there are important insights in the Six Month Review of Governance which should be considered by the Task and Finish group as part of the remit review.
- 6.4.2 “Six Month Review of New Governance Arrangements” 3.2.3 stated that “The engagement highlighted imbalances in Committee remits – with some Committees, particularly Transport, Regeneration and Climate Change having particularly heavy workloads. Governance Committee is not minded to recommend changes to the current remits at this point, seeing the advantage to letting the Committee System ‘bed-in’ further. Governance Committee will take a holistic approach to reviewing Committee remits over 2023/24, taking into account the impact of this review’s recommendations, any changes that may develop through the development of Local Area Committees and changes to the Council’s management structure”
- 6.4.3 Appendix 1 ‘Engagement Findings extracted from report to governance committee 9<sup>th</sup> February 2023” further clarified that “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”.
- 6.4.4 It is stated in the Sheffield City Council Constitution of 6 Sep 2023 under the council functions of each policy committee that ‘when devising policy, evaluating service delivery and taking decisions the committee must consider...climate and biodiversity’. The work of each of our committees are impacted by the climate emergency, and affected by other committees’ decisions, and we will only succeed if we take a cross-committee approach to climate action.
- 6.4.5 Any proposals put forward by the Governance Committee, where needed, should consider the implications of any proposed changes to committee remits to delivering our climate commitments, as set out in “Our Statement of Climate Commitments” at Strategy and Resources Committee on the 13<sup>th</sup> December 2023<sup>3</sup>, and should be considered for both individual affected committees and the council as a whole.

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<sup>3</sup> Sheffield City Council (2023) *Committee Climate Statements*, [https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/documents/s64879/12%20-%2020231204\\_Composite%20of%20Committee%20Climate%20Statements%20-%20V1.0%20Final.pdf](https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/documents/s64879/12%20-%2020231204_Composite%20of%20Committee%20Climate%20Statements%20-%20V1.0%20Final.pdf)

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## Report to Governance Committee

**Author/Lead Officer of Report:**

Laurie Brennan, Head of Policy & Partnerships

**Tel:** 0114 2734755

**Report of:** Director of Policy and Democratic Engagement

**Report to:** Governance Committee

**Date of Decision:** 14<sup>th</sup> December 2023

**Subject:** Citizen participation and Community Involvement – identifying Member leads

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?				
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 paper seeks to identify cross-party Members representation for a Working Group to lead the transformation of citizen participation and community involvement at Sheffield City Council.

It is intended that the Working Group will include citizen, stakeholder and Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector representation. This proposal is an initial step to identify Elected Member involvement from across the Council, ensuring that we can kickstart activity in early 2024.

**Recommendations:**

That Governance Committee:

1. Nominate and agree a maximum of five Governance Committee representatives for the community involvement Working Group.

2. Agree for Governance Committee leads to discuss with respective Groups and identify a maximum of two Member representatives per Group (including at least one that sits on a Policy Committee) by Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> December.
3. Agree to receive a further paper in early 2024 setting out proposed next steps for the community involvement project.

**Background Papers:**

Six Month Review of New Governance Arrangements,

<https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/documents/b27181/Item%207%20-%20Six%20Month%20Review%20of%20Governance%20Arrangements%20-%20report%20Wednesday%2017-May-2023%2011.30%20Council.pdf?T=9>

Citizen Participation and Community Involvement: next steps,

<https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/documents/b28343/Item%207%20-%20Citizen%20Participation%20and%20Community%20Involvement%20Next%20Steps%20Report%20Wednesday%2022-Nov-2023%201.pdf?T=9>

<b>Lead Officer to complete:-</b>									
1	<table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;">I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed, where required.</td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;">Finance: Matthew Ardern, Senior Finance Manager</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="vertical-align: top;">Legal: Andrea Simpson, Corporate Governance Lawyer</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="vertical-align: top;">Equalities &amp; Consultation: Ed Sexton, Senior Equalities and Engagement Officer</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="vertical-align: top;">Climate: N/A</td> </tr> </table>	I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed, where required.	Finance: Matthew Ardern, Senior Finance Manager		Legal: Andrea Simpson, Corporate Governance Lawyer		Equalities & Consultation: Ed Sexton, Senior Equalities and Engagement Officer		Climate: N/A
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	Legal: Andrea Simpson, Corporate Governance Lawyer								
	Equalities & Consultation: Ed Sexton, Senior Equalities and Engagement Officer								
	Climate: N/A								
	<i>Legal, financial/commercial and equalities implications must be included within the report and the name of the officer consulted must be included above.</i>								
2	<table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"><b>SLB member who approved submission:</b></td> <td style="width: 50%;">James Henderson, Director of Policy and Democratic Engagement</td> </tr> </table>	<b>SLB member who approved submission:</b>	James Henderson, Director of Policy and Democratic Engagement						
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3	<table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"><b>Committee Chair consulted:</b></td> <td style="width: 50%;">Cllr. Fran Belbin, Chair of Governance Committee</td> </tr> </table>	<b>Committee Chair consulted:</b>	Cllr. Fran Belbin, Chair of Governance Committee						
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4	<table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td colspan="2">I confirm that all necessary approval has been obtained in respect of the implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist and that the report has been approved for submission to the Committee by the SLB member indicated at 2. In addition, any additional forms have been completed and signed off as required at 1.</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"><b>Lead Officer Name:</b> Laurie Brennan</td> <td style="width: 50%;"><b>Job Title:</b> Head of Policy and Partnerships</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2"><b>Date:</b> 6<sup>th</sup> December 2023</td> </tr> </table>	I confirm that all necessary approval has been obtained in respect of the implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist and that the report has been approved for submission to the Committee by the SLB member indicated at 2. In addition, any additional forms have been completed and signed off as required at 1.		<b>Lead Officer Name:</b> Laurie Brennan	<b>Job Title:</b> Head of Policy and Partnerships	<b>Date:</b> 6 <sup>th</sup> December 2023			
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<b>Lead Officer Name:</b> Laurie Brennan	<b>Job Title:</b> Head of Policy and Partnerships								
<b>Date:</b> 6 <sup>th</sup> December 2023									

## **Citizen participation and Community Involvement – identifying Member leads**

### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1 This paper seeks to identify Member representatives to participate in a cross-party and cross-committee working group to support the Council’s work on transforming its approach to citizen participation and community involvement. It is proposed that the working group will also include and seek to work with citizens and community representatives.
- 1.2 This is an initial step in response to the recommendations agreed by Governance Committee at its meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2023.

### **2. Transforming community involvement: identifying Member leads to work with communities and citizens**

- 2.1 At its meeting on the 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2023, Governance Committee received a draft report from Involve which made clear recommendations for how the Council could improve its practice and approach to community involvement. The recommendations stated that the Council needed an ambitious, shared vision for community involvement which demonstrates why it matters to the organisation and the city. The recommendations also stated that the Council needed to build upon and enhance its engagement practice so that there is a more consistent and coherent approach across the whole organisation.
- 2.2 Governance Committee resolved to:
- “set up a schedule of workshops to start the discussions and work on this report, and engages widely with outside communities and brings regular updates to this Committee and reports the outcomes of its discussions to Full Council or S&R and makes recommendations including the commissioning of activity to S&R or Full Council as appropriate.” (Governance Committee, 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2023).
- 2.3 It is proposed that the above recommendation is taken forward in earnest from the start of 2024, bringing together a coherent programme of activity that:
- responds to the recommendations set out by Involve and other independent reviews (LGA Peer Challenge, Lowcock, REC);
  - involves communities, stakeholders and VCFSE partners from Sheffield;
  - draws on best practice and independent expertise from within the city and beyond; and

- connects to the Council's transformation programme, Future Sheffield.

2.3 To support the development of this work, it is proposed that we establish a Working Group which should consist of cross-party Member representation citizens, stakeholders and VCFSE partners. The Working Group will provide governance and support for the work over the coming year. Recognising that it will only have a small number of representatives, a key part of the Working Group's responsibility will be to connect to and harness existing community voices and networks in the city, ensuring that there is genuine community insight in the transformation of the Council's approach.

2.4 As an initial step, it is proposed that Governance Committee consider and agree an appropriate approach to identifying Members to be involved in the Working Group. The intention is to ensure we have broad cross-party Member involvement beyond Governance Committee but without making the size of the Working Group unwieldy (especially once community representatives have been identified).

It is suggested this should include:

- **Governance Committee representation** – suggest up to five Members from Governance Committee with up to three from Labour and Liberal Democrats and two from the Green Party and Sheffield Community Councillors.
- **Maximum of two Members from each of the main political Groups** – ideally including at least one Member that sits on a Policy Committee. Group Spokespeople from Governance Committee are asked to collaborate to ensure we identify representation from across Policy Committees and LAC Chairs.

2.5 The intention of the suggested approach above is not to be deliberately restrictive but rather to ensure that there is cross-party Member involvement from across the Council balanced with citizen and community representation. Further, Members on the Working Group are to act as a connecting point for their Groups and Policy Committees (where appropriate), providing updates, sharing ideas, connecting to opportunities in Committee workplans and implementing actions.

2.6 Governance Committee are asked to nominate representatives from the Committee and be part of the working group.

2.7 One representative of each political group is asked to engage their wider group and confirm up to two additional nominations to the Working Group by **Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2023**.

#### 4. **How does this decision contribute?**

- 4.1 This is an initial step to identify lead Members from across the Council to support the transformation of community involvement at SCC.
- 4.2 This is in direct response to the recommendations of the Six Month Review of Governance Arrangements and the approach agreed by Governance Committee on 22<sup>nd</sup> November.
- 4.3 Creating an open Working Group with citizen and stakeholder involvement is a vital step and demonstration of the 'People' policy driver in our draft Council Plan, putting people at the heart of our work and involving and engaging citizens in shaping the city's future.

## 5. **Has there been any consultation?**

- 5.1 This proposal from the insight of citizens and stakeholders who contributed to the Council's governance change, the research and report by Involve and the Six Month Review of Governance Arrangements.
- 5.2 As suggested above, the intention is to fully involve citizens, stakeholders and VCFSE organisations in the proposed Working Group alongside democratically elected Councillors.

## 6. **Risk analysis and implications of the decision**

### 6.1 Equality Implications

- 6.1.1 Under the Equalities Act 2010, s149, the authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- (1) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is connected to protected characteristics and prohibited by or under this Act;
  - (2) advance equality of opportunity between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not;
  - (3) foster good relations between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 6.1.2 The way the authority promotes, supports and enables citizen participation and community involvement influences the way the above Duty is met. For example, some considerations in relation to the need to advance equality of opportunity are:
- **Who is participating and being involved** – to what extent does the authority reach and encourage engagement with so-called 'seldom heard' groups? How representative and diverse is this currently? Are appropriate mechanisms consistently used to encourage diverse participation and involvement, (e.g. adjustments, financial, etc)?

- **How participation and involvement take place** – what engagement mechanisms are we encouraging? How accessible, available and appealing are these mechanisms to geographical communities and communities of interest? Are these enabling engagement that is community-led as well as authority-led?
- **When participation and involvement take place** – are we enabling early engagement that might empower communities to help identify issues and solutions? Are we giving people enough time to meaningfully participate and be involved? Are we over-relying on informing people of our plans or consulting on our own ideas rather than jointly developing proposals with communities?

Equality, diversity and inclusion is one of the primary drivers for the approach that is proposed above – ie. to ensure that people from all backgrounds in Sheffield can participate and get involved in the opportunities and issues that matter to them. There is clear evidence in the Race Equality Commission report that we have to do more to make sure that all communities in Sheffield can participate, contribute and play an active role in the city.

6.1.3 There are EDI implications from this report. The Working Group and the developing programme of work must fully involve people from all communities in Sheffield. The resulting change in ambition and practice must enable and support greater participation from different communities in the city.

6.1.4 A full EIA to support the developing programme of activity will be produced.

## 6.2 Financial and Commercial Implications

6.2.1 The recommendations in this report will be undertaken within existing resources. Activity to implement the recommendations will be prioritised factoring in organisational capacity.

## 6.3 Legal Implications

6.3.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

## 6.4 Climate Implications

N/A



## Report to Governance Committee

14<sup>th</sup> December 2023

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**Report of:** Head of Policy and Partnerships

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**Subject:** Update report on review of Council's approach to public questions

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**Author of Report:** Alice Nicholson, Policy & Improvement Officer

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### Summary:

The Governance Committee in July this year agreed to undertake a review of the Council's approach to public questions.

The purpose of the review to ensure the process for citizens to ask public questions is clear, that public questions are triaged in a way that directs them to the most appropriate forum and that those forums are easy to access; consider processes for responding to public questions and the interplay between timescales and quality of responses so that we can best achieve a consistent approach that is fit for purpose in the Committee System.

To undertake the review creatively with citizens and stakeholders, developing proposals which learn from the experiences of those involved within resource and capacity constraints.

This update report sets out the progress of this review to date.

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### Recommendations:

1. That the Committee note the update on the progress of the Review of our Approach to Public Questions at Council Meetings.
2. That the Committee agree to the task and finish group continuing with their work on this review, to bring recommendations to the Committee early 2024.

**Background Papers:** None

**Category of Report:** Open

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# Reviewing Sheffield City Council's approach to public questions

## 1 Background and Introduction

- 1.1 This review of our approach to public questions at Council meetings is a response to a recommendation of the six-month Governance review.
- 1.2 In the six-month governance review Governance Committee heard a clear message from stakeholders, Members and officers that the current approach to public questions is not meeting expectations and needs to be reviewed if it is to be an effective route for citizen voice and democratic accountability.

## 2 The Review Process

### 2.1 Scope

- 2.1.1 In July 2023 the Governance Committee set out its review of approach to public questions at Council meetings. The proposed purpose of the review was to:

1. Ensure the process for citizens to ask public questions is clear, that public questions are triaged in a way that directs them to the most appropriate forum and that those forums are easy to access.
2. Consider processes for responding to public questions and the interplay between timescales and quality of responses so that we can best achieve a consistent approach that is fit for purpose in the Committee System.
3. To undertake the review creatively with citizens and stakeholders, developing proposals which learn from the experiences of those involved within resource and capacity constraints.

- 2.1.2 Specific areas of focus were to actively seek feedback from, and test proposals with, citizens and stakeholders; and report into the Governance Committee. Also that the work on public questions clarify the process for members of the public submitting a question to the Full Council that had not been adequately dealt with by a Policy Committee.

- 2.1.3 The membership of the task and finish from the Governance Committee is Councillors Fran Belbin (task and finish group Chair), Sue Alston, Mike Levery, Sioned-Mair Richards.

### 2.2 Engagement Activity

- 2.2.1 An online survey open to all was available on our Have Your Say Sheffield site September 2023, it was publicised in our citizen newsletter, there were two separate surveys to gather information about people's experience of either asking a public question or presenting a petition at Council meetings, the Governance Committee particularly wanted to hear from people who had never asked a question or presented a petition to find out why they haven't and if we could do anything to encourage in the future.

- 2.2.2 Members of the Governance Committee held an in person public input workshop on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2023, at which the Committee found out directly people's

experience of asking or not asking a public question or presenting a petition, like the surveys.

2.2.3 The Governance Committee received a submission from a Citizen Network known as S.O.S (Sheffield Oversight and Scrutiny), who held a workshop.

2.2.3 In November 2023 officers were asked to share their views on how it feels to be part of the public question response process, this included officers who manage the receipt of public questions, and those who assist with responding.

2.2.4 Also in November the task and finish group held a solutions workshop with citizens who had responded to the survey and asked to be kept involved, the workshop was a hybrid inviting people to attend in person or online.

## **2.3 Findings and solution development**

2.3.1 All of the responses to our surveys, the output from workshops, submission from S.O.S, and engagement with officers has informed solutions development, the current tranche of solutions in response to findings fall into five themes: public awareness and information; triage and track; how question is asked; quality of response; and influence and impact of asking. The task and finish group tested and explored these in principle at the solutions workshop with citizens. We have started to gather input on solutions from Members and officers involved in the public question process.

2.3.2 The changes that people, both citizens and officers, have asked for or support include ones that are quicker to implement as they are about improving our process or action within existing ways of operating, but also there are suggested actions that likely require a constitution change, and some that will have a resource impact. We want to ensure we give all this our full attention; we therefore are not at a point of concluding the review yet.

## **2.4 Continuing the review**

2.4.1 As noted the review has become bigger than we thought, which is good, but it needs more quality assessment and technical input to be a valuable product and deliverable system. Members have listened and want to do the right thing by what has been said, including why we might not implement a suggestion.

2.4.2 The Governance Committee will continue its work on this review with the aim of reporting recommendations for improvement early 2024.

## **3. Recommendations**

3.1 That the Committee note the update on the progress of the Review of our Approach to Public Questions at Council Meetings.

- 3.2 That the Committee agree to the task and finish group continuing with their work on this review, and to bring recommendations to the Committee early 2024.



## Report to Governance Committee

14<sup>th</sup> December 2023

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**Report of:** Head of Policy and Partnerships

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**Subject:** Committee Work Programme

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**Author of Report:** Alice Nicholson, Policy & Improvement Officer

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### Summary:

The Committee's Work Programme is attached at Appendix 1 for the Committee's consideration and discussion. This aims to show all known, substantive agenda items for forthcoming meetings of the Committee, to enable this committee, other committees, officers, partners and the public to plan their work with and for the Committee.

Any changes since the Committee's last meeting, including any new items, have been made in consultation with the Chair, and the document is always considered at the regular pre-meetings of the Committee.

Where applicable the following potential sources of new items are included in this report, on this occasion there aren't any from these sources:

- Questions and petitions from the public, including those referred from Council
- References from Council or other committees (statements formally sent for this committee's attention)
- A list of issues, each with a short summary, which have been identified by the Committee or officers as potential items but which have not yet been scheduled (See Appendix 1)

The Work Programme will remain a live document and will be brought to each Committee meeting.

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### Recommendations:

1. That the Committee's work programme, as set out in Appendix 1 be agreed, including any additions and amendments or items to be confirmed identified in Part 1.

2. Note the indications of items which are likely to need more intensive work (eg. citizen involvement, task and finish groups, policy review and development work) and consider implications for prioritisation of Governance Committee's forward workplan.
3. Consider any further issues to be explored by officers for inclusion on the future iteration of the work programme.

**Background Papers:** None

**Category of Report:** Open

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## **COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

### **Update on the Committee workplan for Governance Committee**

1. At the previous Governance Committee in November, Members discussed the Committee's draft workplan. As part of the discussion, Members recognised that there are items which will need and benefit from longer-term activity, these included community involvement, and review of Committee remits, further to discussion these appear as a revision in this version of the work programme. There remain three items subject to confirmation as to when they can be considered for timetabling.
2. The Governance Committee's work is an essential part of the Council's commitment to continuously improve our committee system and how we work within it as Members, officers and with citizens and partners. However, there are significant constraints on Member and officer capacity and therefore, prioritising the items on the workplan to focus on the things Members most want to achieve in the municipal year is essential.
3. However, the Governance Committee's workplan contains a mix of items. Some are relatively self-contained (eg. with a paper outlining options and officer recommendations for the Committee to discuss and agree in one meeting) while others need much deeper development work with Member, citizen and officer time.
4. To make this clearer, the workplan has been updated to:
  - Reflect the live workplan for the committee as of 5<sup>th</sup> December
  - Include an officer steer on where items are likely to need more intensive development work
5. It is recommended that Members consider the current workplan and discuss items to prioritise over the coming months, particularly where there is policy development and involvement activity needed.

**References from Council or other Committees**

2.1 Any references sent to this Committee by Council, including any public questions, petitions and motions, or other committees since the last meeting are listed here, with commentary and a proposed course of action, as appropriate:

Issue	N/A
Referred from	
<i>Details</i>	
<i>Commentary/ Action Proposed</i>	

### **Member engagement, learning and policy development outside of Committee**

3.1 Subject to the capacity and availability of councillors and officers, there are a range of ways in which Members can explore subjects, monitor information and develop their ideas about forthcoming decisions outside of formal meetings.

Appendix 2 is an example 'menu' of some of the ways this could be done. It is entirely appropriate that member development, exploration and policy development should in many cases take place in a private setting, to allow members to learn and formulate a position in a neutral space before bringing the issue into the public domain at a formal meeting.

2.2 Training & Skills Development - Induction programme for this committee.

Title	Description & Format	Date
N/A		

## Appendix 1 – Work Programme

### Part 1: Proposed additions and amendments to the work programme since the last meeting:

Item	Proposed Date	Note	Suggested approach
Governance Review Implementation Plan	<b>Standing Item</b>	To update the Committee on progress against actions in the Governance Review Implementation Plan and identify further actions for inclusion. (LB)	Regular update to Committee – update appended to this report (Document A)
Member Development Programme	20 <sup>th</sup> July 23  <b>Ongoing</b>	Member Development Working Group to oversee member development activity and the Member Development Strategy 2021-2025, including skills and priorities for learning and development and the inclusion of learning from recent reviews, such as the LGA Peer Challenge and the Race Equality Commission Report. (JD)	Member Development Working Group established July 2023. Committee updated 12 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2023. Further updates and involvement of the Governance Committee, as appropriate.
Public Questions Task and Finish Group	20 <sup>th</sup> July 23  <b>Ongoing</b>	As per the Governance Review recommendation: to formally agree the approach, terms of reference of, and appointment to, the task and finish work on public questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensuring the process for citizens to ask public questions is clear, that public questions are triaged in a way that directs them to the most appropriate forum and that those forums are easy to access.</li> <li>Considering processes for responding to public questions, ensuring a consistent approach that is fit for purpose in the Committee System.</li> </ul>	Review ongoing, an Update Report 14 <sup>th</sup> December 2023.
NHS governance and alignment with our committee system	12 <sup>th</sup> October 2023  <b>Ongoing</b>	Governance Committee to sponsor a task and finish group to consider appropriate Sheffield City Council membership of the forum that considers joint SCC and NHS commissioning and planning through a pooled budget under Section 75 of the NHS Act 2006.	Member Task and Finish but supported by Strategic Commissioning /

		<p>The group is formed of three members of the Governance Committee and one additional from each of the Groups in the administration. It has begun its work and has held two sessions, with a further two in the diary.</p> <p>The group is formed of three members of the Governance Committee and one additional from each of the Groups in the administration. It has begun its work and has held two sessions, with a further two in the diary. The work is on track to report back to the February Governance Committee meeting.</p>	Strategy & Partnerships.
Citizen participation and Community Involvement – identifying Member leads (Community Involvement Working Group)	December 2023 <b>Revised</b>	A report to Governance Committee 14 <sup>th</sup> December seeks up to three members from Governance Committee for community involvement working group and proposes a further paper in early 2024 setting out proposed next steps for the community involvement project.	A long-term project. Will need dedicated Member and officer time outside of Gov Committee meetings.
Review of Policy Committee Remits	December 2023 <b>Revised</b>	<p>It is proposed that Governance Committee establish a new task and finish group which will start meeting in January 2024 lead the review over the course of 2024.</p> <p>Suggested key lines of enquiry for the review include the balance of decision making between LACs and policy committees and the relationships between LACs and policy committees</p>	Will need significant Task and Finish work to look at Policy Committee remits and the interaction between LACs and city level committees.
Urgent Decisions	28 <sup>th</sup> February 24	To review the use of urgent decisions to date, understand whether the process is working as intended, and whether changes are required (DH, JD)	Policy review work – officer research presented to Committee
Charity Sub Committee and SCC role as a charitable trustee.	March 2024	To consider, and recommend to Full Council, the most appropriate way for the Council to discharge its role as Charitable Trustee	Likely to need Task and Finish group

Measuring the health of the Committee System	TBC	To develop and agree a performance framework and set of metrics to enable us to measure progress as the Committee System develops.	Should be developed and designed with citizens, officers and Members. Small number of workshops.
Changes to delegations	TBC	To consider, and recommend to Full Council, changes to delegations (including grants – initially discussed by the Committee in December 2022).	
Officer support and engagement in Policy Committees	TBC	To be defined – need to work with Governance Committee Members and officers to agree scope and focus	

## Part 2: List of other potential items not yet included in the work programme

Issues that have recently been identified by the Committee, its Chair or officers as potential items but have not yet been added to the proposed work programme. If a Councillor raises an idea in a meeting and the committee agrees under recommendation 3 that this should be explored, it will appear either in the work programme or in this section of the report at the committee's next meeting, at the discretion of the Chair.

<b>Topic</b>	
<b>Description</b>	
<b>Lead Officer/s</b>	
<b>Item suggested by</b>	<i>Officer, Member, Committee, partners, public question, petition etc</i>
<b>Type of item</b>	<i>Referral to decision-maker/Pre-decision (policy development/Post-decision (service performance/ monitoring)</i>
<b>Prior member engagement/ development required</b> <i>(with reference to options in Appendix 2)</i>	
<b>Public Participation/ Engagement approach</b> <i>(with reference to toolkit in Appendix 3)</i>	

<b>Lead Officer Commentary/Proposed Action(s)</b>	
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**Part 3: Agenda Items for Forthcoming Meetings**

Meeting 4	14 <sup>th</sup> December 2023	Time				
Topic	Description	Lead Officer/s	Type of item <i>Decision/Referral to decision-maker/Pre-decision (policy development)/Post-decision (service performance/ monitoring)</i>	Prior member engagement/ development required <i>(with reference to options in Appendix 1)</i>	Public Participation/ Engagement approach <i>(with reference to toolkit in Appendix 2)</i>	Final decision-maker (& date) <i>This Cttee/Another Cttee (eg S&amp;R)/Full Council/Officer</i>
Approach to Public Questions at Council Meetings	Update Report	Alice Nicholson				
Review of Policy Committee Remits	Setting up task and finish group – scope and approach	Laurie Brennan				
Citizen participation and Community Involvement – identifying Member leads (Community Involvement Working Group)	Setting up Community Involvement Working Group - seeks up to three members from Governance Committee and proposes a further paper in early 2024 setting out proposed next steps for the community involvement project.	Laurie Brennan				
Standing items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Public Questions/ Petitions</i></li> <li>• <i>Work Programme</i></li> </ul>					

Meeting 5	17 <sup>th</sup> January 2024	Time				
Topic	Description	Lead Officer/s	Type of item <i>Decision/Referral to decision-maker/Pre-decision (policy development)/Post-decision (service performance/ monitoring)</i>	Prior member engagement/ development required <i>(with reference to options in Appendix 1)</i>	Public Participation/ Engagement approach <i>(with reference to toolkit in Appendix 2)</i>	Final decision-maker (& date) <i>This Cttee/Another Cttee (eg S&amp;R)/Full Council/Officer</i>
<i>TBC: Citizen participation and Community Involvement – Community Involvement Working Group</i>	<i>Setting out proposed next steps for the community involvement project.</i>	<i>Laurie Brennan</i>			<i>Yes – to be developed</i>	
<i>TBC: Approach to Public Questions at Council Meetings</i>	<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Alice Nicholson</i>				
Standing items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Public Questions/ Petitions</i></li> <li>• <i>Work Programme</i></li> </ul>					

Meeting 6	28 <sup>th</sup> February 2024	Time				
Topic	Description	Lead Officer/s	Type of item <i>Decision/Referral to decision-maker/Pre-decision (policy development)/Post-decision (service performance/ monitoring)</i>	Prior member engagement/ development required <i>(with reference to options in Appendix 1)</i>	Public Participation/ Engagement approach <i>(with reference to toolkit in Appendix 2)</i>	Final decision-maker (& date) This Cttee/Another Cttee (eg S&R)/Full Council/Officer
NHS governance and alignment with our committee system	Report of task and finish group	Dan Spicer				
Urgent Decisions	To review the use of urgent decisions to date, understand whether the process is working as intended, and whether changes are required					
Standing items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Public Questions/ Petitions</i></li> <li>• <i>Work Programme</i></li> </ul>					

Meeting 8	27 <sup>th</sup> March 2024	Time				
Topic	Description	Lead Officer/s	Type of item <i>Decision/Referral to decision-maker/Pre-decision (policy development)/Post-decision (service performance/ monitoring)</i>	Prior member engagement/ development required <i>(with reference to options in Appendix 1)</i>	Public Participation/ Engagement approach <i>(with reference to toolkit in Appendix 2)</i>	Final decision-maker (& date) This Cttee/Another Cttee (eg S&R)/Full Council/Officer
Charity Sub Committee and	To consider, and recommend to Full Council,	David Hollis	Referral to decision maker		To be defined	Full Council (AGM 2024)

SCC role as a charitable trustee.	the most appropriate way for the Council to discharge its role as Charitable Trustee					
Standing items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Public Questions/ Petitions</i></li> <li>• <i>Work Programme</i></li> </ul>					

## **Appendix 2 – Menu of options for member engagement, learning and development prior to formal Committee consideration**

Members should give early consideration to the degree of pre-work needed before an item appears on a formal agenda.

All agenda items will anyway be supported by the following:

- Discussion well in advance as part of the work programme item at Pre-agenda meetings. These take place in advance of each formal meeting, before the agenda is published and they consider the full work programme, not just the immediate forthcoming meeting. They include the Chair, Vice Chair and all Group Spokespersons from the committee, with officers
- Discussion and, where required, briefing by officers at pre-committee meetings in advance of each formal meeting, after the agenda is published. These include the Chair, Vice Chair and all Group Spokespersons from the committee, with officers.
- Work Programming items on each formal agenda, as part of an annual and ongoing work programming exercise
- Full officer report on a public agenda, with time for a public discussion in committee
- Officer meetings with Chair & VC as representatives of the committee, to consider addition to the draft work programme, and later to inform the overall development of the issue and report, for the committee's consideration.

The following are examples of some of the optional ways in which the committee may wish to ensure that they are sufficiently engaged and informed prior to taking a public decision on a matter. In all cases the presumption is that these will take place in private, however some meetings could happen in public or eg be reported to the public committee at a later date.

These options are presented in approximately ascending order of the amount of resources needed to deliver them. Members must prioritise carefully, in consultation with officers, which items require what degree of involvement and information in advance of committee meetings, in order that this can be delivered within the officer capacity available.

The majority of items cannot be subject to the more involved options on this list, for reasons of officer capacity.

- Written briefing for the committee or all members (email)
- All-member newsletter (email)
- Requests for information from specific outside bodies etc.
- All-committee briefings (private or, in exceptional cases, in-committee)
- All-member briefing (virtual meeting)
- Facilitated policy development workshop (potential to invite external experts / public, see appendix 3)
- Site visits (including to services of the council)
- Task and Finish group (one at a time, one per cttee)

Furthermore, a range of public participation and engagement options are available to inform Councillors, see appendix 3.

## **Appendix 3 – Public engagement and participation toolkit**

### **Public Engagement Toolkit**

On 23 March 2022 Full Council agreed the following:

A toolkit to be developed for each committee to use when considering its ‘menu of options’ for ensuring the voice of the public has been central to their policy development work. Building on the developing advice from communities and Involve, committees should make sure they have a clear purpose for engagement; actively support diverse communities to engage; match methods to the audience and use a range of methods; build on what’s worked and existing intelligence (SCC and elsewhere); and be very clear to participants on the impact that engagement will have.

The list below builds on the experiences of Scrutiny Committees and latterly the Transitional Committees and will continue to develop. The toolkit includes (but is not be limited to):

- a. Public calls for evidence
- b. Issue-focused workshops with attendees from multiple backgrounds (sometimes known as ‘hackathons’) led by committees
- c. Creative use of online engagement channels
- d. Working with VCF networks (eg including the Sheffield Equality Partnership) to seek views of communities
- e. Co-design events on specific challenges or to support policy development
- f. Citizens assembly style activities
- g. Stakeholder reference groups (standing or one-off)
- h. Committee / small group visits to services
- i. Formal and informal discussion groups
- j. Facilitated communities of interest around each committee (eg a mailing list of self-identified stakeholders and interested parties with regular information about forthcoming decisions and requests for contributions or volunteers for temporary co-option)
- k. Facility for medium-term or issue-by-issue co-option from outside the Council onto Committees or Task and Finish Groups. Co-optees of this sort at Policy Committees would be non-voting.

This public engagement toolkit is intended to be a quick ‘how-to’ guide for Members and officers to use when undertaking participatory activity through committees.

It will provide an overview of the options available, including the above list, and cover:

- How to focus on purpose and who we are trying to reach
- When to use and when not to use different methods
- How to plan well and be clear to citizens what impact their voice will have
- How to manage costs, timescales, scale.

**There is an expectation that Members and Officers will be giving strong consideration to the public participation and engagement options for each item on a committee’s work programme, with reference to the above list a-k.**

## Governance Review Implementation Plan update (November 2023)

1. In the Six Month Review of Governance, Full Council approved the Governance Review Implementation Plan (GRIP) which predominantly comprises of practical, officer-led actions to improve the function of our committee system. Along with practical actions, there are a number of items which are work in progress as they are part of the Governance Committee's workplan for this year (eg. democratic participation).
2. Governance Committee agreed to receive regular updates on the delivery of the actions in the GRIP and where appropriate, to receive and consider draft content (eg. draft guidance to support the committee system).
3. To help bring to life the material in the GRIP itself, the below summarises the key achievements from the GRIP to date along with actions we still need to complete.

### **Improving how we explain the system**

This was a critical part of the Governance Review and focused on how we better enable Members, citizens and officers in SCC to navigate the system and support committees to be effective in their role.

#### What we've done

- Rebranded and reformatted the democracy area of the SCC website to make it cleaner and easier to navigate for anyone trying to find dates or content for Committee meetings.  
See: <https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/mgListCommittees.aspx?bcr=1>
- Carrying on work to improve citizen involvement in our committees through a deep dive into public questions and petitions with citizens and stakeholders; and the proposal at Governance Committee December 2023 for a cross-party community involvement Working Group.
- Re-instated the Member Development Working Group to support Member learning and development. This has included work to improve the role profiles of Members within the Committee System.

#### What we still need to do

- Develop solutions and implement improvement to our approach to Public Questions with citizens and officers, an update report is on agenda for Governance Committee December 2023, with a report of recommendations to Governance Committee anticipated early 2024.
- Continue to improve the accessibility of our Committee meetings both in terms of physical and online access, working with the Sheffield Equality Partnership network. This includes further testing hybrid technology for meetings and using less formal places in the Town Hall for committee meetings.

### **Improving the support we provide to those working in the system**

#### What we've done

- Provided support and signposting to wellbeing advice and support for Members through the internal Member Newsletters

- Updated internal approaches to Policy Committee workplans so that the overall set of workplans are regularly discussed by Committee Chairs and the Senior Leadership Team to ensure we better manage cross-cutting issues and support cross-committee working.
- Improved briefing guidance available to officers, particularly to support clearer work planning and support better committee system oversight by the S&R Committee
- Created a SharePoint portal to support officers to better navigate the Committee System. This includes access to guidance on work planning, briefings, decision and policy report templates, and guidance on key impact assessments (EIAs, CIAs).
- Achieved a consistent increase in the number of EIAs being completed and published with reports, ensuring we are evidencing any implications for people in Sheffield and appropriate mitigations.

#### What we still need to do

- We need to develop the skills of our officers to improve the quality and consistency of reports being presented to committees. We are working with our HR Team to develop the learning and development needed.
- Make it easier for officers to develop and get reports completed and published on time using the Mod.Gov app.
- Finalise a new policy toolkit to support officers engaging Committees in policy development.

### **Supporting development of our governance beyond the Six Month Review**

#### What we've done

- Implemented Member Questions at Policy Committees, building on the established approach used at Full Council
- Introduced a proactive work planning approach for Full Council meetings, working cross-party with Whips
- Introduced new word limits on Notices of Motion at ordinary meetings of Full Council

#### What we still need to do

- Review the remits of Policy Committees and the associated relationship with Local Area Committees (part of the Governance Committee's work plan for this year)
- Support the improvement of democratic participation in the Committee System, complementing the work in the Future Sheffield programme to transform our approach to citizen engagement at SCC.