Sheffield's Big City Conversation

Independent Governance Event Report

Nigel Slack

Foreword

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Nigel Slack

Active Citizen

Overview

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

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

Hearing from key voices: panel representations

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

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

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

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

The full text of Anne's comments are available here:
https://www.itsoursheffield.co.uk/speech-by-anne-barr-on-behalf-of-its-our-city-30-10-19-at-sheffield-town-hall/

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

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

Sheffield for Democracy recently published a short paper entitled '*Improvements we seek to local democracy in Sheffield City Council'* and this is available here:
https://sheffieldfordemocracy.wordpress.com/2019/07/15/sheffield-for-democracy-improvements-we-seek-to-local-democracy-in-sheffield-city-council/

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

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

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

- The starting point should be identifying what it is that we want to achieve before creating a new structure

- Business would want any new governance to support long-term sustainability, certainty and accountability, enabling businesses to deliver employment and wealth creation in the city.

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

- it is important that Sheffield assess different governance models apolitically to ensure the system which is put in place works for the city and is sustainable.

- Changing systems is not a simple process and therefore examining what works and what doesn't in the current system is more important than just the alternative structures;

- Do not look upon this as a binary choice - there are different designs and hybrid models which could be introduced.

- Sheffield should try to design principles from which to then build a system in order to increase the chances of establishing a model that is strong with cross-party buy in for the long term.

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

- importance of using the conversation and engagement to define attributes as opposed to defining a system.

- vital to consider the barriers which cannot be overcome, for example the legal requirements (eg. where councillors are the only ones able to make decisions and spend money)

- look beyond binary model choices and consider hybrids and examine the opportunity for strong community links with robust engagement culture.

Engagement and discussion: feedback from the roundtables

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

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

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

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

Table 1: Decision making

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

- **Role of citizens** - Participants strongly emphasised a desire to have greater in involvement for the public in decision making and greater empowerments for citizens, bringing in different voices into decision making forums.

- **Accountability and proportionate representation** - there were a number of comments about the importance of decision making having a range of voices. This included 'experts' (with the right skills and experience), citizens, co-opted independents and Elected Members from different parties.

- **Subsidiarity** – there were a number of comments made about the importance of decisions being taken at the most appropriate level – ie. with and closer to citizens or through neighbourhood level structures/committees that are more focused on the needs of specific communities and places.

Table 2: the role of Councillors

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

- For many, t**he role of their Ward Councillor needs to reflect the needs of local people** and participants would like it if party politics could be removed from discussions.

- **Holding elections differently could have a role here** - all out elections every four years with all councillors serving the same four year term, instead of thirds which Sheffield City Council currently operates under.

- While there is now web-casting available for meetings to be watched by anyone at any time, comments imply that **the public need to be made more aware of what it is the Council is doing** and have this pushed more widely as an available resource.

- **Member behaviour and standards** – sense that citizens have expectations about the behaviour of Councillors in office (uphold Nolan principles).

Table 3: challenge and scrutiny

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

- **Member skills** – importance of supporting Councillors to have the skills to undertake robust scrutiny of decisions

- **Independence in the scrutiny process** – a keenness to have different, independent voices involved in scrutiny committees, designing-in roles for citizens, community organisations and expert voices.

- **Pre-scrutiny of decisions** – opportunity to think about when scrutiny takes place so that scrutiny are involved before decisions are made to check that the process towards a decision has been robust.

Table 4: transparency

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

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

- **Vital that public involvement is cross-city** so that it is not just those who would regularly be involved in Council discussions. Needs broad, representative coverage of different demographics in the city.

- Importance of **consulting local communities and connecting with community networks** to improve transparency and reach different voices.

- **Transparency and accountability were rated highly** in the discussions on the other tables too, implying the need to ensure any system going forward would be fully transparent and easy to understand from the perspective of someone outside the Council.

<u>Table 5: devolving power</u>

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

- **Clearer statement of who can make decisions** – eg. Councillors set policy direction; fine for officers to make the day-to-day decisions within strategy guidelines.

- **Strengthening local decision making** – a number of comments for ward / neighbourhood / sub-neighbourhood structures to take decisions closer to people and places.

- **Importance of safeguards around devolved powers** – there were some concerns voiced about the 'messy' complexity of devolution to localities and examples of challenges that have occurred elsewhere (London Boroughs)

- **Diverse voices** - importance of broadening the diversity of opinions and voices which are heard in the City and representative democracy

- **Physical location of meetings** - moving the location of meetings out into the communities in order to try and improve the connectivity between the Council and the community.

Key concerns

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

- **The importance of strengthening citizen voice and understanding of decision making** – clear communication and harnessing community networks to connect people with the city's democracy

- **Neighbourhoods and localities** – empowering and strengthening decision making, engagement and involvement below the city level.

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

Next Steps

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

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

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

Appendix 1 – table discussion comments

Decision Making - Table 1

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

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

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

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

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

Local people make choices: 3 per ward, every 4 years elect all at elections

to scrutinise all at once too quick a process

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

If on committee proportionate to the number of Councillors.

Independent chairperson

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

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

Who elects the committee chair?

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

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

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

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

to help accountability

Decision Making - experts from outside

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

to increase transparency

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

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

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

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

Park the party politics.

What is the problem
Culture
Political literacy
Power

Table 2- Councillors

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

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

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

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

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

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

Once every 4 years
Votes turnout but I think this is overall party
Smaller parties
Councillor increase in pay but less of them.
Visible website highlighting what they are voting on so public can comment.

Councillors job is to represent the electorate first, and their party second.
Annual elections are harmful - too much political point scoring.

Move to all-out elections every 4 years
Councillor behaviour - uphold and enforce the Nolan Principles. Behave respectfully.

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

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

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

Elections every 4 years.

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

Table 3 Challenge & Scrutiny

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

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

Do councillors and others need training in how to do scrutiny?
To avoid very costly mistakes. Do we need ways to "prototype" plans for public engagement - eg Division Street pedestrian scheme. Role play and scenario modelling.

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

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

Why are scrutiny committees only made up of councillors?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Should be seen as critical friend

Public should be able be involved in the scrutiny

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scrutiny committees need to have independent experts on them.

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

Table 4 : Transparency

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

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

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

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

Reports - yes to real evidence

Yes- consultation in advance?

Think imaginatively with confidence.

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

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

Webcasting is an improvement.

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

Yes webcasting

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Table 5: Devolving Power

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

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

Ward decisions

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

Yes devolved decisions , owe citywide setting of ERICA

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

What happened to the Ward Plans?

US style Alderman.

Schemes affecting wards should have local representation.

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

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

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

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

The lack of specifying of alternatives makes pros and cons comment very difficult.

Neighbourhood devolution can be an opportunity for extremism and   abandoned in south London borough for this reason.

Devolution can be really messy1 People don't necessarily agree.

How do we deal with difference?

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

Non-elected people do make delegated decisions

Needs to be more clear about how it all works.

There needs to be more political literacy.

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

Yes if they have expertise eg trees!! Amey

Their needs to be more culture shift eg transparency power?

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

What does this actually mean, more info please

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

Needs more transparency and scrutiny.

Appendix 2 – key concerns

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

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

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

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

The public should sit on scrutiny committees

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

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

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

End to the political whip for councillors

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

Proper use of advice from experts from wherever its available.

Lack of transparency of decision making process

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

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

How to make the process more transparent?

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

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

Upskill communities to be active in decision making.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

More transparency and accountability.

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

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

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

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

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

I would like to see better scrutiny put in place and feedback to community groups.

My concern with council is they are scoring points against each other and it becomes very annoying.

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

Behaviours of Councillors was not addressed.

How to minimise party politics and unite all councillors for the sake of the city.

How to ensure the council never ever gets into situations like the tree saga or imprisoning residents etc. again.

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

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

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

Much more real accountant ability and engagement with local people.

Clear reports, consultation, evidence gathering etc. before decisions rather than afterwards.

Change the system in order to be able to change the culture.

How can neighbourhoods be better represented in decision making?

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

Don't get hung up on structure. Focus on design principles.

Whatever structures are proposed there must be better scrutiny and challenge.

Learn from elsewhere.

Councillors need to be held to Nolan principles in all aspects of their work.

Please provide clear flowcharts showing how decisions are made in the council.

Scrutiny - who decides what and when is scrutinised.

How can local issue be introduced into council decisions.

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

max)

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

Meaningful role for all councillors
Decision making for the good of city not individual parties - end of tribalism.

How is the proposed output going to address the need for cultural and behaviour change?
This is a key priority!

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

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

Publicity of what the Big City Conversation means to citizens.
Engaging the youth.