



Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee 28th November 2019

Evidence Session E – 6pm-8pm

Groups and Individuals who have requested to give evidence in person

Written Evidence From:

Dr Karen Ford, via online Call for Evidence

What does good decision making look like to you?

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

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

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

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

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

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

See previous comments and:

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

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

The influence of unelected officials

The current control by 10 councillors

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

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

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

Fair and meaningful representation

Increased participation and impact

Cultural change hand in hand with new system structure and processes

Setting clear standards and improvements and accountability for make them

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

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

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

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

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

The current system needs radical reform.

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

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

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

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