



## Governance Committee Report

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**Report of:** Director of Legal and Governance

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**Date:** 27<sup>th</sup> October 2021

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**Subject:** Engaging and involving Sheffields in transforming the city's governance

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**Author of Report:** Laurie Brennan, Head of Policy and Partnerships  
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**Summary:**

This report:

- Recognises the involvement and engagement activity undertaken thus far to inform the early stages of thinking on the new committee system proposals (eg. Draft Design Principles)
  - Summarises the proposed approach to listening to and involving communities in the transition to the committee system
  - Sets out how we intend to create opportunities for citizens to engage in the development of the committee system between now and the end of December 2021
  - Proposes to work with Involve to deliver a deliberative and innovative engagement programme from January 2022 on how make decisions in a way that empowers people and is inclusive, accessible, representative and connected with all of the people and communities in Sheffield.
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**Recommendations:**

That the Governance Committee:

1. Endorses the proposed approach to engaging communities over the coming months, including the proposed underpinning principles which will become part of our draft Design Principles.
2. Endorses the proposed innovative activity with Involve to engage citizens in how we make decisions that are inclusive, accessible and representative in Sheffield.

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**Background Papers:**

Big City Conversation summary

<https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/documents/s43905/Appendix%20-%20-%20Big%20City%20Conversation%20-%20summary.pdf>

Empowering communities: shifting power from the Town Hall to communities in every part of Sheffield

<https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/documents/s43901/Empowering%20Communities%20Cabinet%20Report.pdf>

The Vision for a Modern Committee Governance System: Draft Design Principles and Engagement Approach

<https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/documents/s46351/9.%20Draft%20Design%20Principles%20and%20Engagement%20Approach%2009.2021%20CR.pdf>

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**Category of Report:** OPEN

## Statutory and Council Policy Checklist

<b>Financial Implications</b>
YES Cleared by: Kayleigh Inman, Senior Finance Manager
<b>Legal Implications</b>
YES Cleared by: Andrea Simpson, Corporate Governance Lawyer
<b>Equality of Opportunity Implications</b>
YES Cleared by: Adele Robinson, Equalities and Engagement Manager
<b>Tackling Health Inequalities Implications</b>
NO
<b>Human rights Implications</b>
NO:
<b>Environmental and Sustainability implications</b>
NO
<b>Economic impact</b>
NO
<b>Community safety implications</b>
NO
<b>Human resources implications</b>
NO
<b>Property implications</b>
NO
<b>Area(s) affected</b>
NONE
<b>Is the item a matter which is reserved for approval by the City Council?</b>
NO
<b>Press release</b>
NO

# Engaging and involving Sheffields in transforming the city's governance

## Purpose

This paper provides an overview of the proposed approach to ensuring that the Sheffields have a strong and active role in the development of the city's new Modern Committee System.

## Background

1. Sheffield is going to be the first Core City in England to introduce a new, Modern Committee System of governance from May 2022.
2. This is a major change for how democratic decisions are made in the city and we have an opportunity to pioneer a modern approach to the Council's formal decision making but also in how we get to those decisions – how open and transparent our approach is; how citizens and city partners are involved in decisions, and how we reflect and review the decisions we make to get the best outcomes for Sheffield.
3. Sheffields told us in the Big City Conversation in 2019/20 that they don't feel like they can influence decisions (only 1-in-3 felt they could) but many more people said they would like to, particularly on issues that matter to them. Further, Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee's (OSMC) work on SCC's governance in winter 2019 suggested that:

“The issues people care about are often local in nature. Our decision-making structure needs to include channels through which people, communities and partners can work with local councillors about what is important to them. We need to strengthen locality arrangements based on the findings of the Big City Conversation and ensure that these arrangements work effectively alongside, and feed into, citywide decision-making processes.”
4. In the One Year Plan, we committed to being a City Council that is genuinely in and of its communities, with a deeper interconnection to the people that live and work in the city. A new governance model alone won't achieve this but alongside Local Area Committees and a focus on creating a new culture and ways of working, we have an opportunity to better connect the city council's ways of working with citizens. Our approach to involving Sheffields and listening to their perspectives, expectations and aspirations as part of the new Committee System and Local Area Committee (LAC) arrangements should encapsulate the behaviours of the Council that we want to be – as set out in the One Year Plan.

# We want to be a Council that this city can be proud of

To be confident that Sheffield City Council can deliver this ambitious one year recovery plan, we need to reflect on our strengths and areas for development as an organisation; as well as be willing to invest in the corporate health and capacity of the council. As an employer and leader in the city, we need to aspire to be an outstanding organisation; a council that all Elected Members, staff and citizens can be proud of.



Clear direction & collective leadership

**Clear direction and collective leadership** – focused on a clear and ambitious set of priorities which provide a sense of purpose for every employee and are collectively owned by the organisation's leadership at political and officer level



Confident and outward looking

**Confident and outward looking** – sharing success, learning from others and being a strong partner in the City Region and across the north



Collaborative

**Collaborative** – working with all partners and citizens; providing leadership and support where it's needed and getting out of the way where we need to. Within SCC we will strive to work as 'One Council' with common purpose



Committed to excellence

**Committed to excellence** – with a strong performance culture; an organisation that empowers staff to try and to learn, and which values focus, follow through and getting things done. We invest in the talent and development of our staff so that those who work for SCC are the best they can be.



Connected to our communities and citizens

**Connected to our communities and citizens** – a Council in and of our communities – working in the open, with and alongside people - a visible, accessible organisation

5. *How* we develop the new Committee System will reflect these ambitions so that throughout and at each and every stage we will work in the open, involve and listen to citizens and be honest about the challenges we face. We recognise that we are learning and want to learn through this process. We won't always get things right but want to be open and honest in our approach

## Involving citizens in the design of Sheffield's Committee System

6. As agreed by the Governance Committee on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2021<sup>1</sup>, we have set up a programme to manage the work that needs to happen between now and May 2022 so that we are ready to move to a Committee System. The Committee also agreed that citizens and stakeholders will have a vital role throughout the programme and we will undertake:
  - a. Topic-by-topic engagement with internal and external stakeholders on technical questions as they arise for the Committee's consideration, including via an open public invitation for participants to contribute via a stakeholder group made up of interested parties;
  - b. A city-wide, facilitated, representative, discursive engagement exercise in the new calendar year, by which time more citizens' input could be more impactfully applied to the emerging model, and to shaping future ways of working within it; and
  - c. Continuous review of this approach, with further detail to return to this Committee in October for consideration
7. The timescales for the implementation of Sheffield's committee system are tight and over the coming months, the Governance Committee will have to consider and

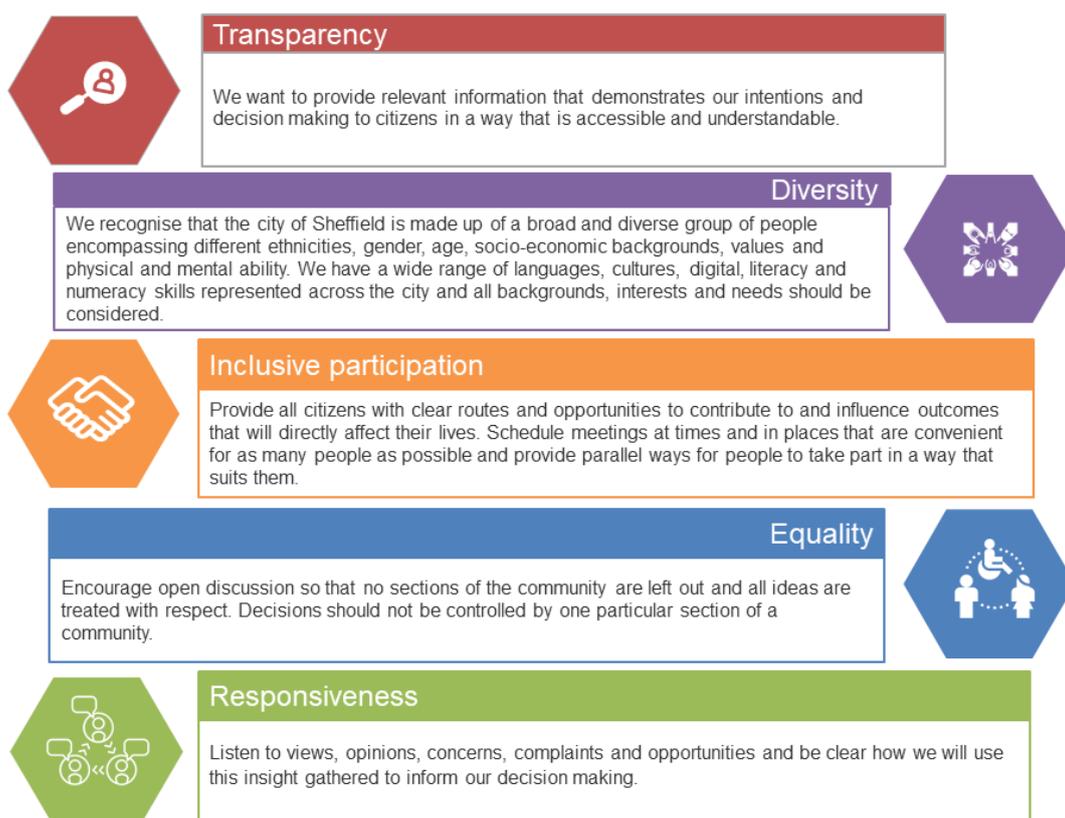
<sup>1</sup> The Vision for a Modern Committee Governance System: Draft Design Principles and Engagement Approach <https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/documents/s46351/9.%20Draft%20Design%20Principles%20and%20Engagement%20Approach%2009.2021%20CR.pdf>

develop proposals on different elements of the new system in order to make overall recommendations to Full Council for endorsement in January 2022, and then final, detailed recommendations for changes to the Council's constitution in March 2022. This process is set out in a paper elsewhere on today's agenda.

8. Our intention is to work in the open, listening, learning and ensuring that everyone that lives and works in the city - citizens, partners, community organisations, elected politicians and SCC staff - have genuine and meaningful opportunities to have a say and shape the development of the new governance arrangements. At times it will undoubtedly feel messy and possibly feel too fast-paced but we will endeavour to ensure that we use the city's networks and frequent communications to keep everyone up to speed on how we're doing and any opportunities to get involved.
9. We will be comfortable in sharing draft proposals, developing thoughts and ideas which enable citizens, community organisations, Members, partners and officers opportunities to inform and shape the steps we take as a city.

The below sets out a set of draft principles to ensure that all citizens have a strong role in shaping the city's new governance. These principles underpin the approach that we intend to take throughout the Transition to Committees programme, recognising the diversity of Sheffield's population and that we will seek to work openly at every stage of the work, will go to our communities enabling everyone to get involved in ways that best work for them and be responsive to citizen perspectives throughout the development of the new committee system.

10. We would welcome the Committee's views on the draft principles and we propose that, pending comments, we integrate the below with our draft Design Principles, informing our future ways of working.



## | What we've done so far

11. Whilst there is a lot to do to develop Sheffield's Committee System proposal itself, we have existing useful evidence and perspectives which remain important in shaping the approach to decision making that citizens want in Sheffield.
12. This includes:
  - a. **The Big City Conversation** – online survey, public events and conversations with citizens across the city on their priorities on what they love about their neighbourhood, what needs improving and how they want to get involved in local issues and decision. There's a summary of the key messages [here](#).
  - b. **Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee** – OSMC undertook a review a Select Committee-style review of governance at SCC, hearing from expert witnesses, citizens and interest groups about how to improve governance and decision making at SCC. This included a call for evidence which all informed OSMC's '[Principles for Governance at Sheffield City Council](#)' report which was endorsed by Full Council in January 2020 and has formed the basis of our draft design principles for the new Committee System at SCC. All the material and evidence received can be found in the 'special' OSMC meetings from 26<sup>th</sup> November to 18<sup>th</sup> December 2019 [here](#).
  - c. **Initial conversations with stakeholders** – over the summer in 2021, we held initial conversations with key interested stakeholders (convened by Centre for Governance and Scrutiny) to hear from key voices in Sheffield and challenge us on the Committee System programme and help shape the ways of working for the coming months. The stakeholders challenged us to be clearer about our ambitions and what we wanted to achieve in the development of the Committee System and this has resulted in the draft Design Principles which the Governance Committee agreed in September.
  - d. **Launch of Local Area Committees (LACs)** – LACs are a vital part of the city's new approach to engaging, empowering and enabling communities by shifting decision making to local people and local areas. LACs built upon the evidence from the Big City Conversation and the OSMC's recommendations to Full Council. From September 2021, LACs have been having their first meetings and to start to develop local area plans for each LAC, [a citywide survey](#) and local community conversations have been launched to identify key local issues and priorities and also how people want to get involved. The views of citizens in the LAC engagement work will help inform the Committee System proposals, particularly in shaping how people want to get involved in decision making.

## | September to December 2021 – building the foundations

13. Over the coming months, the Governance Committee will start to look at the different aspects of Sheffield's new Committee System – such as the design principles that underpin it, how decisions will be made, options for the number of committees, and how we review and scrutinise decisions.
14. Between now and the end of the year, we intend to take an open and flexible approach to getting people involved and enabling citizens, Elected Members and

partners to shape the different parts of new system's development as part of a whole-Committee enquiry. This will include:

- **Sheffield Committee System network** – we will enable people to sign-up to receive regular updates on the activities and work that we're undertaking, informing people about engagement events and seeking views on the issues we're wrestling with. We will use SCC's communications channels and connect through existing VCF sector networks, the Sheffield Equality Partnership and Race Equality Commissioners to ensure that we reach out to all communities in Sheffield.
- **Public events** – in and around the city, we will hold a number of public events for anyone to come and get involved in conversations about different aspects of the new Committee System, supported by CFGS. The first of these is on the 22<sup>nd</sup> October (see below).
- **Fortnightly public drop-ins** – from 26<sup>th</sup> October, we will hold fortnightly drop-in events (alternating between physical events and virtual events) for anyone in Sheffield to come and talk to us about the development of the new committee system. The physical events will be held in different locations across the city and we'll let you know in advance of the times, venues and key topics that we could discuss. We'll communicate using the Council's e-newsletters and share through the city's community networks. Some of these drop-ins are likely to be used as workshop sessions with more involved facilitation, while others will be updates and an opportunity for questions – it will depend on the timing of each.
- **Come to you** – where community networks already have scheduled meetings or want officers to come along and talk about the transition to a committee system, we will do everything we can to come, listen and talk with citizens. We will also look to set up dedicated sessions for different communities of interest in the city to ensure that we the diverse perspectives of our citizens are heard.
- **Fortnightly Elected Member drop-ins** – similarly, we will hold fortnightly drop-ins for Councillors to discuss the developing proposals, raise ideas and challenges and ask questions. This is to create regular and dedicated time for Members to talk to the programme team about the new governance proposals. Some of these drop-ins are likely to be used as workshop sessions with more involved facilitation, while others will be updates and an opportunity for questions – it will depend on the timing of each. We will also discuss with the Governance Committee and Members what further opportunities need to be created to ensure there is opportunities for Members to inform the final proposals.
- **Transitional Committees** – from October 2021, new Transitional Committees will meet monthly to support and advise the Co-operative Executive on key areas of policy development. The Transitional Committees will be important cross-party policy development fora in the year ahead but also will be able to test and model some of the behaviours and ways of working for Sheffield's Committee System. This will be vital engagement and learning for Members and citizens, helping to test how we can best make thematic committees work from May 2022. Each

Transitional Committee will provide regular feedback to the Governance Committee throughout the coming months.

- **Business** – as part of our engagement programme over the coming months, we will work with the city’s business leaders and representative organisations (eg. Sheffield Chamber of Commerce) to listen to business perspectives on our developing governance proposals.
  - **Whole Governance Committee hearings** – a number of whole Committee hearings towards the end of November / early December which bring together the learning from all engagement activity and desk research along with expert witnesses.
15. Following endorsement by the Governance Committee, we are holding an in-person conversation facilitated by CfGS on the 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2021 to listen to people’s thoughts about our draft Design Principles for SCC’s new governance and new ways of working under the Committee System. This event is scheduled to take place *after* the publication of this paper but we will provide the Governance Committee with a verbal update on the outcomes from the event at the meeting on the 27<sup>th</sup> October 2021. We will also be running an online version of the event on the 26<sup>th</sup> October at 5:30pm.
  16. As well as ensuring there is a full programme of opportunities for members to feed into the design process and to learn about the change as it takes place, the council is developing a member Development Strategy and Member Development Plan for the coming year. In addition to the usual considerations of induction and ongoing member development this aims to address the unique member development needs arising from the transition to committee system. The Local Government Association, Centre for Governance and Scrutiny and other external training providers are supporting this process as well as delivery by Sheffield City Council officers. A report about the progress and ambitions around Member development was received by the Audit and Standards Committee on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2021<sup>2</sup>.
  17. We also know that we don’t and can never claim to have all the answers or can connect to all the voices in our communities. Through our voluntary, community and faith sector (VCF), independent organisations and our two universities, we are also keen to connect to and support all channels to bring greater community voice into the development of the city’s new governance. We are happy to attend and have discussions with local VCF networks and organisations to listen to views on the developing committee system – going to people rather than expecting people to come to us.
- | December 2021 to May 2022 – deeper engagement to shape the city’s future
18. As set out in the paper to the Governance Committee on the 20<sup>th</sup> September 2021, we have sought to bring in independent involvement and engagement expertise to provide dedicated capacity and innovation in connecting to and involving citizens in Sheffield’s transition to the committee system.
  19. The governance change creates an opportunity for us to start to build stronger and deeper connections to our communities, reconciling and learning from challenges from recent years to ensure that citizens and particularly those Sheffielders that are

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<sup>2</sup> Sheffield City Council Audit and Standards Committee (21<sup>st</sup> Oct 2021) *Member Development Progress Report*, <https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/documents/s48016/9.%20Audit%20and%20Standards%20Report%20-%20Final%20-%20Oct%202021.pdf>

seldom heard, can play a strong role in the future of the city's local and city level decision making.

20. This naturally and must go beyond the formal and constitutional elements of how a committee system is structured into the ways of working, behaviours and cultures that underpin the city's decision making. This work should bring longer-term development for the city's democratic participation and wider involvement, establish new and re-connections with communities and potentially capacity building for SCC officers and Members to ensure we have the skills and expertise we need to genuinely design-in involvement and empowerment in our ways of working.
21. To summarise, the draft question we are trying to address through this work is '*how do we make decisions in a way that empowers people in Sheffield and is inclusive, accessible, representative and connected with all of the people and communities in Sheffield?*'. This could include:
  - Engagement in and through new committee structures
  - How we ensure that decision making is driven by people and communities from the start
  - How SCC better connects to and communicates with communities
  - How we improve openness, transparency, improve council meetings and direct engagement to Members
  - How we improve our engagement skills and approaches to better connect to Sheffields in ways that work for them.
22. To support this work, we have commissioned Involve who are a leading UK public participation charity who will bring a wealth of knowledge, creativity, and expertise to support our ambitions to become a genuinely connected and empowering council. Involve have worked on a wide range on local and national engagement projects, most recently including the Climate Assembly UK which was commissioned by six House of Commons Select Committees and are supporting a citizens assembly on democracy in the UK. <https://www.involve.org.uk/>
23. The majority of this activity will take place from December 2021 and in the early part of next year. We are continuing to work with Involve on establishing the programme of work but at present, this is likely to focus on three main elements:
  - a. **Looking inwards** – working with Members and officers to ensure that there is a strong alignment of engagement and the new decision-making model and developing knowledge and understanding.
  - b. **Looking outwards** - working with us to develop and deliver public engagement activity, including engaging stakeholders pre-Christmas to help shape what that activity looks like post-Christmas. This will likely be deliberative and particularly focus on the perspectives of people and communities in the city, particularly focusing on engaging diverse and seldom heard communities in Sheffield.
  - c. **Training and mentoring** – training and development for Members and officers to ensure that we have the capabilities to become the empowering and engaging organisation that we want to be.
24. The estimated cost of this work is around £100k with the majority of the budget (~£75k-£80k) being invested in the deliberative and extensive public engagement activity from January 2022.

25. To provide the Committee with further detail on the proposals, colleagues from Involve will attend the Governance Committee meeting on the 27<sup>th</sup> October 2021.

#### May 2022 onwards

26. We are conscious that the coming months will be intensive and whilst we have a specific timescale to establish Sheffield's new Committee System by May 2022, the transition and transformation here is longer term.
27. Alongside the development of Local Area Committees, the transition to the committee system and particularly the engagement activity is a major opportunity to listen, learn and involve communities from all of Sheffield and establish foundations for a new way of making decisions in a major city.
28. May 2022 is a significant milestone but should not be seen as an end; we will continue to reflect, review and learn as the committee system iterates over time, particularly in how thematic committees involve citizens in their work and decision making.

## Recommendations

29. That the Governance Committee:
  - a. Endorses the proposed approach to engaging communities over the coming months, including the proposed underpinning principles which will become part of our draft Design Principles.
  - b. Endorses the proposed innovative activity with Involve to engage citizens in how we make decisions that are inclusive, accessible and representative in Sheffield.

## Implications

#### Legal implications

30. While there is no specific consultation duty in respect of the design of a new committee system of governance, the Local Government Act 1999 imposes a Best Value duty on a local authority "to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness" which includes a general duty to consult for the purpose of deciding how to fulfil that duty. The proposals in this report are compliant with these requirements.

#### Equalities implications

31. The engagement of all communities in Sheffield will be a fundamental part of the engagement programme to ensure that citizens from all backgrounds and parts of the city have can shape the development of our new governance arrangements. We will work with VCF sector organisations and the Sheffield Equality Partnership network to ensure we enable Sheffielders with protected characteristics to have a meaningful role in the development of the new governance arrangements. Further, we will ensure that there are dedicated for key communities to engage, maximising accessibility to events and engagement sessions.

32. Governance Committee Members gave a clear steer that we need to ensure that we engage people and communities that are seldom heard in the development of our new decision making. Working with Involve, we will ensure that there is a significant focus on connecting to those communities, creating conversations and spaces where people feel safe to participate in a way that works for them.
33. In line with the approach set about in the above report, we will listen and learn as the work develops over the coming months. If at any point, people and communities feel they haven't had the opportunity to get involved, we will proactively seek to involve them in whatever ways work best for them to ensure that their ideas, views and aspirations are heard in the transition to committees work.

| Financial implications

34. The engagement and communications budget allocation approved by Co-Operative Executive on 21<sup>st</sup> July was £300k. The estimated spend to engage Involve is up to £100k and so is within the funding envelop approved for the Transition to Committee Programme.