

A Modern Committee system for Sheffield, based on experience of other councils

Sheffield doesn't need to reinvent the wheel



No need to reinvent the wheel

- **Many UK cities/large councils already use committees to make decisions** (including Core Cities, larger than Sheffield)
- **SCC's decisions are not fundamentally different to, or more numerous than other cities/large councils**
- **So, no reason to think the shape of Sheffield's system needs to be fundamentally different from the norm**
- **All councils changing to an MCS have explicitly done it without increasing costs or bureaucracy**
- **Surely, Sheffield will follow this national blueprint?**

Some basics are missing

- **Other councils, from the very start, state their intent to:**
 - 1. Increase the legitimacy of council decision-making**
 - 2. Make key improvements to democracy & representation (embedding democratic values and procedures)**
 - 3. Make change cost-neutral**
 - 4. Have no significant increase in bureaucracy**
- **These intents are the foundation for guiding the whole process and design of a new MCS**
- **Without intents, goal is unclear & process inefficient**
e.g. some still mistakenly think that an MCS will mean “many meetings” & “cost a lot more”



What have other councils done?

- A Modern Committee system for a city the size of Sheffield, based on similar councils, will have:
 - 6 policy committees (Maximum. Some have fewer)
 - 14 councillors per committee
 - Around the same number of meetings for each councillor, compared to the previous system
 - Cost of this for SCC = £49,000/year less than old system



6 Committees

- **6 committees is the norm**
- **Replaces the 10 councillors in the cabinet**
(No reason for 10 members with portfolios in 'strong leader' system – just the legal maximum)
- **Each Policy committee gets the remit from Full Council to make decisions in its policy area**
- **No 'Executive' committee** (recommend from national experts)
- **14 councillors per committee** (Legally, must be politically proportionate)
- **Chairs should be politically proportionate**
 - Labour 3, LibDem 2, Green 1
- **Vice-chairs from a different party to the chair**



Example of Committee Remits

(Just examples. Sheffield will choose remits to best fit the challenges it faces)

- 1. Education, Children & Families**
- 2. Housing, Health & Social Care**
- 3. Climate change, Environment, Transport & Development**
- 4. Communities, Equalities & Culture**
- 5. Business, Regeneration & Investment**
- 6. Long-term Strategy & Governance**



Improving legitimacy

- **More inclusive decision-making**

Especially when the ruling group (whether Labour or LibDem, recently in Sheffield) has a low electoral mandate, from a low voting turnout

- **Power-sharing and cooperation**

Cross-party, with stakeholders, communities & those the council has found it hard to listen to

- **Committees involving outside voices**

- **Co-opting stakeholders who pledge to facilitate 2-way connections with their networks**
- **Use more modern, flexible, efficient and open ways of securing input, as highlighted during pandemic**

- **Vital to clearly show the impact and influence of this input on decisions**



Typical frequency of meetings

- Committees do not need lots of meetings to make better informed decisions than the limited time/knowledge available from 1 Cabinet member
- The 5 Policy committees meet 12 times/year
- Full council meets 6 times/year
- Long-term Strategy committee meets 6 times/year
- Old scrutiny committees not needed. Built in to the decision-making process (~21 fewer meetings/year for SCC)
- Councillors will go to around the same number of meetings as before



Costs

- Based on the national MCS design norms & meeting frequency, cost/meeting (provided by SCC officers) and existing SCC allowances for committee chairs
- £49,000/year less than SCC's old system
 - Gives scope to, e.g., incentivise community stakeholders
- Committee chairs & vice-chairs both have allowances
 - Vice-chairs must also play important role & so have an allowance in the new system, that they didn't before
- All councils have explicitly decided from the start that change to an MCS will be cost-neutral

Cost comparison details

Cost comparison of the 'Strong Leader' system and a Modern Committee system

Sheffield Council's proposal to keep the existing 'strong leader' system										
Meeting	Full Council	Cabinet	Policy & Development & Performance	Children YPFS Scrutiny	Economic EW Scrutiny	Healthier CASC Scrutiny	Safer SC Scrutiny			
Frequency/year	12	12	12	7	5	7	6			
Democratic Services	£14,820	£14,820	£14,820	£8,645	£6,175	£8,645	£7,410			£75,335
Cllr Allowances	£0	£89,060	£4,729	£4,729	£4,729	£4,729	£4,729			£112,705
									Total	£188,040

Modern Committee System										
Meeting	Full Council	Policy & Strategy Committee	Committee A	Committee B	Committee C	Committee D	Committee E	Urgency Committee		
Frequency/year	6	6	12	12	12	12	12	1		
Democratic Services	£7,410	£7,410	£14,820	£14,820	£14,820	£14,820	£14,820	£1,235		£90,155
Cllr Allowances	£0	£8,009	£8,009	£8,009	£8,009	£8,009	£8,009	£0		£48,056
									Total	£138,211
									Saving	£49,829