



## Report to Governance Committee

### Author/Lead Officer of Report:

Laurie Brennan

Head of Policy and Partnerships

[laurie.brennan@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:laurie.brennan@sheffield.gov.uk)

**Report of:** Director of Policy, Performance and Communications

**Report to:** Governance Committee

**Date of Decision:** 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022

**Subject:** **Community involvement and empowerment: next steps**

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? ( <i>Insert reference number</i> )				
Has appropriate consultation taken place?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" 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"/>
If YES, give details as to whether the exemption applies to the full report / part of the report and/or appendices and complete below:-				
<p><i>“The (<b>report/appendix</b>) is not for publication because it contains exempt information under Paragraph (<b>insert relevant paragraph number</b>) of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).”</i></p>				

### Purpose of Report:

This report provides an update for the Governance Committee of recent review work undertaken by Involve.

In addition, the report sets out a proposed approach to developing a new vision for participation in Sheffield. Initial work will focus on assessing SCC’s internal participation ambitions, capacity and capabilities before collaborating with communities and stakeholders on a shared vision.

**Recommendations:**

It is recommended that the Governance Committee:

1. Note the progress made in the work with Involve
2. Note the proposed approach to developing a new vision and approach to participation
3. Note that Strategy and Resources Committee will lead work on a new vision for participation as part of their work plan.

**Background Papers:**

Summary of findings from Transition to Committees engagement activity:

<https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/documents/s48724/8.%20Transition%20to%20a%20Committee%20System%20Inquiry%20Session%201%20-%20Appendix%206.pdf>

Strengths and weaknesses in Sheffield City Council's approach to public participation in decision-making – interim findings, Full Council, 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2022

<https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/documents/s50863/Appendix%203.pdf>

Lead Officer to complete:-	
1	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: <i>Liz Gough, Assistant Director of Finance</i>
	Legal: <i>Sarah Bennett, Assistant Director of Legal and Governance</i>
	Equalities & Consultation: <i>James Henderson, Director of Policy, Performance and Communications</i>
	Climate: <i>n/a</i>
	<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	<b>EMT member who approved submission:</b> <i>James Henderson, Director of Policy, Performance and Communications</i>
3	<b>Committee Chair consulted:</b> <i>Cllr. Julie Grocutt, Chair of the Governance Committee</i>
4	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 EMT 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> 24 <sup>th</sup> June 2022	

## Purpose of report

1. This paper provides an update for the Governance Committee on work to date as well as setting out proposed activity over the coming months to transform the approach to involvement and participation.

## Background

2. Citizens and stakeholders have had a critical role in shaping Sheffield's new committee system. Throughout the Transition to Committees programme, Members and the project team engaged with Sheffields in a range of virtual and in-person discussions, events and more formal evidence hearings to make sure that communities steered and shaped the key building blocks of the new governance model.
3. This activity included renewing and enhancing a clear set of [Design Principles](#) which have underpinned the development of Sheffield's Committee System, providing a clear view from citizens and Members about our new approach to governance and decision making.
4. Alongside development of the new Policy Committees, Local Area Committees have been established with Members, LAC teams and local partners working closely with communities to develop local Community Plans which map out the key issues that local communities have prioritised and how these will be tackled. These Plans can be found on the webpage for each LAC here: <https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/home/your-city-council/local-area-committees>
5. As previously reported to the Governance Committee, our conversations with citizens raised a range of issues that are more fundamentally about the about the cultures and behaviours in SCC and how connected, engaged and trusted the Council is by communities in the city. These challenges clearly interconnect with the governance system but are actually about how the Council operates and its ways of working regardless of the decision making structures that are in place.
6. Therefore, as part of the Transition to Committees programme, SCC agreed to work with the participation charity, Involve, to take a more rigorous assessment of how the council involves citizens before setting out an ambitious plan for change, co-designed with citizens and community organisations.

## Involve have undertaken a short review of SCC's engagement and involvement strengths and weaknesses

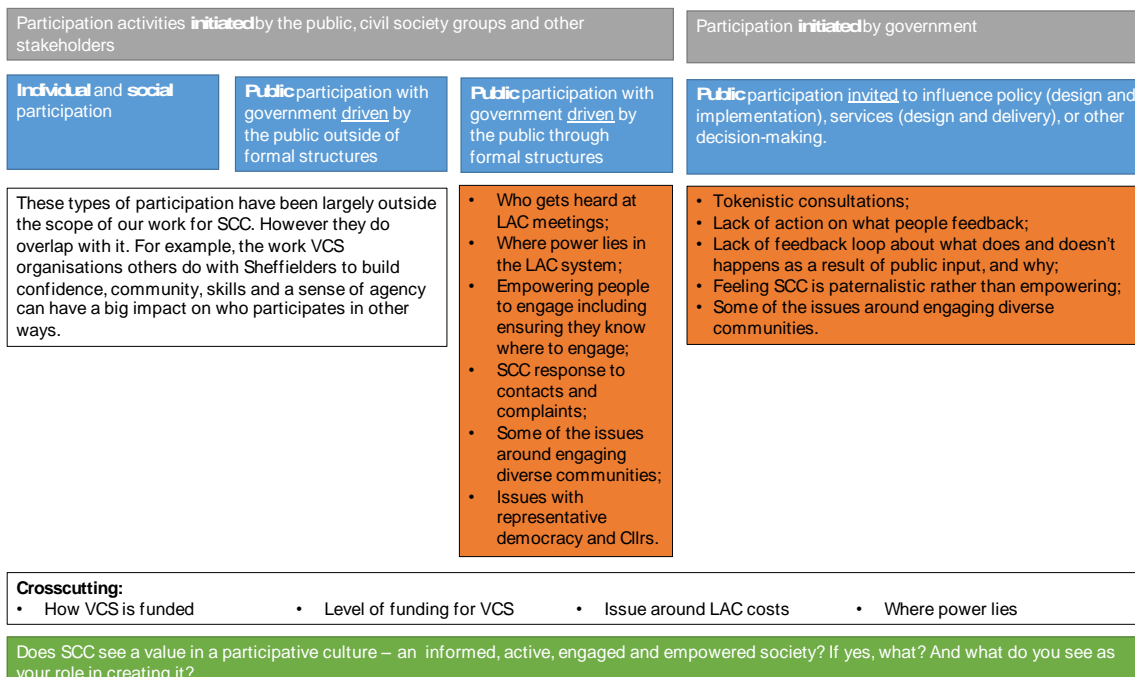
7. Working with VCF organisations and stakeholders and talking to staff from SCC, Involve have undertaken a short assessment of engagement and involvement practise at SCC. This was focused on what citizens public and stakeholders have told SCC about our public engagement approaches (eg. Big City Conversation),

identifying strengths and weaknesses and looking at a number of case studies which demonstrate SCC's approach.

8. The headlines from this review were presented to Full Council at the Extraordinary General Meeting as part of the proposals for the new Committee System. It is available in Item 5, Appendix 3 here:  
<https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/documents/s50863/Appendix%203.pdf>
9. The key issues identified by Involve through from their work are summarised in the below, demonstrating some good practice but some significant challenges.
10. Involve have drafted a longer review report which will now be shared with the stakeholders and organisations that contributed to ensure that it reflects their views and perspectives. It will also be shared with the Members of the Governance Committee.

### **Involve's review with stakeholders and communities suggests that we need a clear vision for participation in Sheffield and to improve the citizen participation we undertake**

11. Based on the work with stakeholders and VCS partners, Involve's strategic analysis of SCC's participation challenge is two-fold:
  - a. **SCC does not have a clear vision for public participation in Sheffield** – ie. we do not have a clear sense of if, and why, we see it as valuable or an understanding of what our role is in supporting participation to thrive in the city.
  - b. **More narrowly, SCC has an inconsistent approach to public participation in the different decisions it makes** – ie. different standards across portfolios and projects, some excellent examples and some poor ones too with issues around resourcing, whether participation is timely, meaningful and impactful, how we engage diverse communities (see detail in the review summary [here](#)).
12. The figure below sets out Involve's analysis of these two strategic challenges against participation theory. It outlines the different types of participation that can exist and the role that governments (ie. SCC in our case) play in supporting and sustaining them. The **green box** shows the first challenge around SCC's overall vision for participation in the city. The **orange boxes** show the second critique, focusing just two types of public participation in decision-making.



13. Involve have suggested that it is possible to improve SCC’s practice (ie. the orange boxes) above separately from looking at the wider strategic ambition (green box). This is particularly true of the involvement activity that that is *initiated by SCC* (eg. engagement in policy development or decisions, consultation etc). We do not need a wider vision for public participation in the city in order to improve our engagement and consultation activity to stop them being perceived as tokenistic, for example.

14. But, Involve suggest that the issues in the orange and green boxes are intertwined. For example, how we choose to resolve some of the issues highlighted in the orange boxes – not least around the LACs and its engagement with diverse communities – may differ depending on the overall vision we have for public participation in Sheffield.

15. Further, only focusing on participation and involvement where either SCC invites citizens to offer a view (eg. consultations) or through public involvement by citizens in public meetings (eg. LACs or policy committees) would significantly limit our ambitions for a more comprehensive participatory approach in Sheffield. It would also ignore a key challenge raised by citizens and stakeholders – namely, how they get issues on the council’s agenda and have those issues resolved.

16. Finally, there are also several crosscutting challenges identified by Involve’s work, specifically:

- a. **LACs** – a vital aspect of our approach to participation and involvement in Sheffield and whilst LACs have only existed for just over a year, how they develop could be essential to reconnecting with citizens (eg. more than a council meeting in local areas but where local citizens are more deeply involved in collaborating with Members to make local decisions). Further, LACs have to engage communities of interest as well as communities of geography.

- b. **LACs and policy committees** – this is clearly at a very early stage and will undoubtedly develop but the relationship between LACs and the new central policy committees will continue to be one key element of how SCC connects to communities. This relationship will develop and we (SCC and communities) will become better at engaging on issues at the right geographical level. Areas for development include – how issues can be aggregated and escalated, how citizen insight is accessed and harnessed by policy committees from LACs; and knowledge about the decisions that can be made at each level.
- c. **Capacity and resource** – Involve suggest that addressing the challenges above will require changes in internal SCC practices and cultures, senior leadership ownership and importantly, resourcing. This may also bring greater clarity and consistency to how participation and involvement is co-ordinated in the organisation and the interplay with policy committees (eg. ensuring that citizen insight can be accessed as a shared intelligence resource for all committees so that we don't repeatedly ask Sheffieldsers the same questions and that citizen involvement is undertaken at a point to maximise impact on decision-making).

### **We need to make the most of the opportunity to work with Involve and transform SCC's approach to participation and involvement**

- 17. Involve's work has given us a clear set of recommendations from Sheffieldsers about what we need to do to improve participation, trust and ultimately, the quality of the decisions we make *with* citizens.
- 18. There was a natural alignment of this work to the Transition to Committees Programme but it has always been clear that the work between participation and involvement would go beyond the timescales of the move to a committee system.
- 19. The intensive work to implement the new committee system in Sheffield, alongside existing demand on resources, has taken priority which has meant that we haven't had capacity to progress the project on participation and involvement as quickly as we would have hoped. But, in response to the views from citizens and stakeholders, the review undertaken by Involve has independently identified the issues we need to tackle and suggested how we best do this.

### **Proposed approach**

- 20. In line with the views of citizens, stakeholders and Involve, it is proposed that we now develop a vision for public participation in Sheffield, setting out our ambition for a participative culture in the city, what our role is as the City Council in creating that culture and what role others play. However, it cannot be created by SCC alone, it will need to be done collaboratively with the VCS sector and communities.

21. There is a risk that in setting an ambitious vision for participation, we (rightly) raise expectations amongst citizens that SCC is not ready or equipped to meet. Before we work with citizens, stakeholders and partners on a new vision, it is proposed that we undertake a short internal project to ensure that participation and involvement is rooted in the council's development as an organisation and that there is common and consistent knowledge of why participation is central to achieving our wider ambitions for the city.
22. Working with Involve, it is proposed that this internal project will be led by the Director of Policy, Performance and Communications and the Director of Communities. This will particularly focus on:
- a. **Establishing a baseline** – we currently do not have a clear understanding of participation and involvement expertise, activity and capacity across SCC. Working with Heads of Service, we will aim to build a clearer, consistent picture of the strengths across the organisation and consequently, where we need to build resource and develop new skills and competencies
  - b. **Securing senior leadership and ownership** – we will work with the organisation's senior officers to ensure that participation and involvement is established as a fundamental route to achieving our priorities - how it delivers better decisions, better outcomes with and alongside communities. This approach will complement the current activity on a new Corporate Plan for SCC and aligns directly with the new set of values developed by staff.
23. The intention would be to undertake the above project with Involve over the summer with a report back to Strategy and Resources Committee in October 2022. However, it is recommended that the activity to develop a new vision for participation is led by the Strategy and Resources Committee, in line with its responsibility for corporate strategy and resources. The Strategy and Resources Committee have already identified the need to develop a new approach to engagement and involvement in their work programme for this year.
24. The internal approach described above is advised by Involve as an important step to ensure that SCC has a robust and coherent perspective of what it wants to achieve and is ready to work collaboratively on a shared participation vision so that citizens and partners see and experience a consistent commitment to change across SCC.
25. We would then undertake a collaborative approach with VCS partners, citizens, Members and officers to create the vision for participation, carefully considering how to best maximise involvement of the city's diverse communities in the work.
26. Ideally, the new vision would be developed and in place for the start of the new municipal year in 2023/24 alongside the implementation of any recommendations from the six-month review of the new committee system.

27. Finally, it is important to emphasise here Involve's support of training and development for officers to enhance our capacity and expertise remains in place. However, taking the above approach will enable us to maximise the impact of that training offer so that we can undertake better participation and engagement activity across the whole of SCC.

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

28. The work undertaken to date has involved reviewing existing engagement, particularly assessing recent engagement and participation activity in Sheffield and talking with stakeholders and community groups in the city.
29. The proposed next steps include working closely with senior officers and staff before undertaking collaborative work with VCS and communities on a new vision for participation and involvement in the city.

### **Risk Analysis and implications of the decision**

#### **Equality Implications**

30. 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.
31. There are no direct EDI implications from this report by as the review undertaken by Involve demonstrates, the development of a participation vision for the city must 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.

#### **Financial and Commercial Implications**

32. As part of the Transition to Committees programme, £100k was budgeted for work on public participation and involvement. It is not anticipated that the proposed activity outlined above will incur costs beyond the allocated budget.

#### **Legal Implications**

33. There are no specific legal implications arising from this report. The Council's duties in relation to consultation will need to be taken into account within the work undertaken for and by the Strategy and Resources Committee on the Council's approach to public participation and this will be reflected in future reports.



## **Climate Implications**

34. There are no direct climate implications arising from this report. There are likely to be climate implications arising from the council's response to many of the issues documented in the first part of this report: climate impact assessments will be undertaken for these as needed.

This page is intentionally left blank