

Governance Committee

Meeting held 30 June 2022

PRESENT: Councillors Julie Grocutt (Chair), Sue Alston (Deputy Chair), Christine Gilligan, Dianne Hurst, Mary Lea, Mike Levery and Joe Otten

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 Apologies for absence was received from Councillors Mark Jones, Mick Rooney, Bryan Lodge and Penny Baker.

2. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

2.1 No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the press and public.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

4.1 **RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meetings held on 9 March 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

5.1 The Committee received Public Questions from two members of public, prior to the meeting. Both members of the public were in attendance to raise their questions.

5.2 Mr Alan Kewley

Why had the two previous Governance Committee meetings been cancelled?

The Chair (Councillor Julie Grocutt) explained these meetings were provisional and would have been used if the Committee needed more time to discuss issues in the lead up to Annual Council.

Where did scrutiny fit in to the new Committee System?

The Chair explained the intention was that scrutiny style discussions took place in Committees as these were all politically proportionate. This allowed for cross party discussions in meetings before making decisions.

Could the start time of meetings be adjusted as morning meetings were difficult to attend for members of the public.

The Chair explained that Members had other commitments which had to be considered. There was a calendar of meetings approved by Full Council for the 2022/23 municipal year

How can Council meetings be made more user-friendly to encourage more 'grass-roots' participation and provide more 'bottom-up' feedback to the Council's new Governance Committee. Those who attend a Public Meeting should be invited to submit a simple Feedback Form, to summarise their general impression, and suggest any improvements.

The Chair stated that the Governance Committee did a lot of listening last year during the design process and that the Committees ears had not closed now that the new system was in place. The Committee would welcome ideas and reflections to feed into the six-month review as per item 7 on the agenda. A key part of planning for that review was deciding how to bring in the voice of residents and stakeholders. The Chair added that item 9 on the agenda also covered how the Council would continue thinking about the bigger picture around public participation.

Mr Kewley attended the Council's special meeting on 23-March, and submitted a Public Question. The reply indicated that this Governance Committee would monitor our new Local Area Committees, which were now in operation but still subject to review. Item 7 on this agenda involves the Review process, but how can we be sure that all interested parties are involved in this.

The Chair explained the Governance Committee will be monitoring the governance of the Local Area Committees (LACs), including how they fitted in with the new policy committees from a process point of view.

The report began to deal with Mr Kewley's question at paragraph 4.7 of item 7. Part of the Committee's work is to review all of our processes from November so that the Council

can be confident that people are able to contribute.

The Chair again referred to item 7, on the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee agenda from 31 May this year, the report called 'Our Sheffield: The Year Ahead'. Section 11 of that report was about the 'opportunity to further develop our approach to devolution and community empowerment'. It said that 'the Council's longer-term approach to devolution of powers [to Local Area Committees] and funding of these structures' were among a number of unresolved issues which could be addressed this year.

Councillor Mary Lea added that LACs were still evolving and would continue to develop with time. It was mentioned that the South LAC was piloting a hybrid meeting, which would allow for participants to attend remotely.

Mr Kewley also made comments on the Council's webcasting system. He mentioned the sound quality was poor when viewing live or recorded meetings from home.

5.3

Nigel Slack

Nigel Slack had previously requested that the Strategy & Resources Policy Committee looked at adding 'A review of the Election Cycle' to their workplan. To consider whether the introduction of 'All out Elections' would be a better fit, as suggested by evidence taken in the Transition design process, for the new Committee Structure as well as saving money. Mr Slack said that he was yet to receive a response to the cost per annum of the current 'Election by Thirds' approach and the comparison to 'All out Elections'.

Therefore, could the Governance Committee respond to that query and also comment on whether they would be willing and able, either if tasked by the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee, or on their own decision, to undertake that review.

The Chair explained she would follow up the on the above, with the Strategy & Resources Policy Committee.

Can Council, over time and with the guidance of the Governance Committee, produce some guidelines for members of the public about when issues they wish to ask questions on move from one Committees remit to another.

It was mentioned that at the previous Transport, Regeneration and Climate Policy Committee, Mr Slack asked a question that he

presumed to be in their remit, as it was an issue on a new development on Chapel Walk that was clearly a danger to residents and public. However, at some point this became an issue for the Housing Policy Committee.

Can the Committee identify at what point this happens and how this type of confusion can be better handled for both staff and the public, to help prevent problems in the future.

The Chair explained that this process could be clearer, and that Committees would look at processes around this.

The Chair thanked Mr Slack for attending to meeting and raising his questions.

6. PLANNING FOR THE 6-MONTH REVIEW OF NEW GOVERNANCE

- 6.1 The Committee received a report of the Director of Legal and Governance which began the process of planning for a review of the new governance arrangements which the Council had implemented from May 2022.
- 6.2 The Assistant Director (Governance) Alexander Polak thanked the Governance Committee for their hard work and time spent on this transition to a Committee System.
- 6.3 The Assistant Director (Governance) referred to the report's recommendations. It was mentioned that recommendation 1 was a re-instatement from a previous meeting in which Full Council had already agreed. Recommendation 2 was to approve the addition of 2 extra meetings in November. Recommendation 3 would form the main substance of the meeting as it was directed for Members to discuss their experiences, following the launch of the new system and introduction of Policy Committees.
- 6.4 The Assistant Director (Governance) explained that it was down to Members to input on how the 6-month review process should feel. Members were asked to consider the report and then give Officers a steer on how the 6-month review should be carried out.
- 6.5 In the meantime, if there was something urgent that Members felt needed amending, prior to the 6-month review, then Members of the Committee could put forward a motion to Full Council, to amend the Council's constitution.
- 6.6 Members of the Committee discussed the plan for the 6-month review and the key points to note were: -
- 6.7 The Assistant Director (Governance) explained it was intended for

the Governance Committee to hear from a range of witnesses at the November meetings, if the Committee approved that recommendation.

6.8 It was suggested that an additional meeting be arranged to look at how Full Council operated in the new system and issues around Job-Share/Co-Chair. The allocation of 30 minutes for Public Question/Petitions also needed to be re-considered whilst considering the public's views.

6.9 A Member of the Committee raised the importance of consulting with other external organisations, different to those who were consulted at the last inquiry. It was believed that witnesses who should be called upon to give evidence, should be members of the public and other organisations who were involved in Council functions and attended meetings.

The Chair mentioned it would be useful to consult with those who were consulted at the last enquiry to see how they thought the transition was going.

6.10 A Member of the Committee referred to wording around sub-committees' ability to take urgent decisions. It was mentioned that the Council needed to have more capacity to take urgent decisions.

6.11 It was suggested that Policy Committees met on consistent days of the week, for each of their meetings.

6.12 A Member of the Committee raised concerns around the volume of business at some Policy Committees. It was suggested that either, the length of meetings needed to be extended or, the format of agendas needed to be changed.

6.13 A Member stated the current arrangement around dates and times of meetings could be preventing people of the city from being a part of decision-making at Sheffield City Council. It could also be preventing people from pursuing the career of becoming a councillor.

6.14 The Assistant Director (Governance) referred to the proposed wording which was circulated at this meeting relating to 5.11 of the Council's Procedure Rules.

It was as follows '5.11 Meetings of Policy Committees shall be conducted according to the following procedures:- (a) Meetings shall last no longer than 2.5 hours, subject to the proviso that Members may, by agreement, continue beyond such time limit by a period of not more than 30 minutes. (b) Any unfinished business after the period of 2.5 hours (or 3 hours by agreement) shall be deferred to the next meeting of the Body, or be voted on without debate'

- 6.15 A Member of the Committee suggested that each Policy Committee took a vote to extend the meeting time once they reached their time limit of 2.5 hours.
- 6.16 Another Member agreed that Policy Committees should have the ability to extend their meeting time, although had reservations around leaving meetings open ended, as they could become hard for the Chair to manage. It was stated that meetings needed to be time limited if a Policy Committee agreed to extend their meeting time.
- 6.17 A Member of the Committee referred to 5.12 of the Council's procedure rules, in which it stated that 'Meetings of all other Bodies, with the exception of Regulatory Committees, shall be conducted according to the following procedures:- (a) Meetings shall last no longer than four hours, subject to the proviso that Members may, by agreement, continue beyond such time limit by a period of not more than 30 minutes. (b) Any unfinished business after the period of four hours (or four hours and 30 minutes by agreement) shall be deferred to the next meeting of the Body, or be voted on without debate.

The Member thought a similar principle to extend by 30 minutes, should be adopted for Policy Committees.

- 6.18 A Member believed that meetings should only be extended to finish the item of business that the Committee was currently discussing. The Member was cautious that by extending meetings for 30 minutes that it could become a frequent occurrence.
- 6.19 The Director of Legal and Governance, Gillian Duckworth, suggested a proposal that meetings could be extended by 30 minutes, twice. The Policy Committee would have to vote to extend by 30 minutes and then vote again once the initial 30 minutes was reached.
- 6.20 After the discussion, the following amended wording was proposed by Councillor Sue Alston, seconded by Councillor Christine Gilligan.

To replace 5.11 of the current council's procedure rules with '5.11 Meetings of Policy Committees shall be conducted according to the following procedures:- (a) Meetings shall last no longer than 2.5 hours, subject to the proviso that Members may, by agreement, continue beyond such time limit by a period of not more than 30 minutes on up to two occasions in any one meeting. (b) Any unfinished business after the period of 2.5 hours (or up to 3.5 hours by agreement) shall be deferred to the next meeting of the Body, or be voted on without debate.'

- 6.21 On being put to the vote, the amendment at paragraph 6.20 above was carried.

6.22 **RESOLVED:**

(1) That as per Council's resolution, the Governance Committee's review of the new governance system commences six months after its implementation (November 2022) with a view to recommending improvements to Full Council in May 2023. This review will:

- a. Use the previously agreed 'strategic aims' and 'design principles' as its success criteria
- b. Actively seek and use feedback from residents, stakeholders, partners, councillors and officers to inform its assessment against those criteria, in line with the new ways of working expected of all decision-makers within the new system
- c. Take account of any changes to the local and national context

(2) That two extra provisional dates be added to the Governance Committee's programme in November to provide time for the review

(3) That members discuss their experiences of the launch of the new system and first round of Policy Committees, and in doing so begin collating a list of issues which may need consideration in November.

(4) That a recommendation by this Committee relating to the Council's Procedure Rules be taken to the next meeting of Full Council, as set out at paragraph 6.20.

7. MEMBER DEVELOPMENT

7.1 The Committee received a report of the Director of Legal and Governance. The report introduced the Governance Committee to a new area of responsibility added to their remit as part of the transition to the committee system: responsibility for member development. The current Member Development Strategy was appended, and the report described the training completed or planned for the remainder of this year, in line with that strategy.

7.2 The Committee was informed that the Audit & Standards Committee always had remit to consider Conduct Training for Members.

7.3 The Director of Legal and Governance explained that page 3 of the report set out the annual programme for Member Development.

7.4 The Member Development Strategy 2021-25, which was at appendix 1, aimed to provide Members with tools and ongoing skills they need to mobilise local communities, grow community capacity, support local innovation and to be able to take important decisions and represent their constituents.

7.5 The Director of Legal and Governance invited the Committee to consider the current strategy and give thought on where the strategy could be improved. Members were also asked to give initial reflections on the training provided so far.

- 7.6 Members of the Committee discussed Member Development and the key points to note were: -
- 7.7 The Director of Legal and Governance explained that training was not strictly decided by Council Officers. The Director of Legal and Governance had regular meetings with the Whips to consider Member Development. Although she suggested essential training to the Whips at times, it was always discussed with Members first.
- 7.8 The Director of Legal and Governance explained the difficulty of making training mandatory for Members. She stated that mandatory training could be imposed if Members agreed for it to be. The Committee could also determine whether specific training for Members needed to be mandatory.
- 7.9 A Member of the Committee stated one purpose of forming a Members Working Group was to improve how Member Training was communicated to Members. It was added that Member Training had always been poorly communicated in the past. The Member added that Members needed to be informed of training details and how it would benefit them.
- 7.10 A Member of the Committee suggested that Member training be accessible to Members via the Members Portal, if a Member was unable to attend a session. It was added that this had been done on previous occasions. The Member also suggested that Members had a E-Learning account, similar to Officers, which tracked all their learning.
- 7.11 A Member of the Committee believed that feedback should be collected from Members after training sessions, in order to improve Member Development and future sessions.
- 7.12 A Member raised concerns as currently, Officers who sat on the Senior Officer Employment Sub-Committee had to be EDI trained. Although, Members who sat on the panel which appointed Senior Officers, did not need to be EDI trained.
- 7.13 A Member of the Committee mentioned how it could be more beneficial and engaging for Members, to have training focused on Council policies, which Members were responsible for.
- 7.14 A Member of the Committee stated it would be useful for Members to understand how many Members were expected to attend training. It was mentioned that this could be done by sharing an expected percentage uptake figure.
- 7.15 The Director of Legal of Governance asked the Committee if they wanted to gather more information on Member Development as a Committee, or task a working group with it and to report back.

The Assistant Director (Governance) informed the Committee that as part of the re-structure in Democratic Services, an Officer had been employed and tasked with Member Development. The Committee were also informed there was a Member Development Charter provided by South East Employers and that other organisations had opted-in and received Charter status.

7.16 The Committee agreed for the Member Working Group to review Member Development and the issues raised at the meeting, with the Director of Legal and Governance and report back at a later stage.

7.17 **RESOLVED:** that **(1)** the report be noted along with the Committees discussion relating to the report; and **(2)** to request the Member Development Working Group to review Member Development with the Director of Legal and Governance and to report back to this Committee at a future date.

8. ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

8.1 The Committee received a report of the Director of Legal and Governance which provided an update for the Governance Committee of recent review work undertaken by Involve.

8.2 The report also set out a proposed approach to developing a new vision for participation in Sheffield. Initial work would focus on assessing the Council's internal participation ambitions, capacity and capabilities before collaborating with communities and stakeholders on a shared vision.

8.3 The Head of Policy and Partnerships, Laurie Brennan, explained that he had received comments from It's Our City in regard to the language used in the report, specifically on the use of 'Co-Design' and the extent of citizen involvement. The Head of Policy and Partnerships agreed the language used there was too excessive therefore he apologised for this, recognising that while we did have citizens engaged in the work, we wouldn't want to over-claim the extent of this and we know that we still have much to do as an organisation in this regard.

8.4 The Head of Policy and Partnerships mentioned the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee had seen public participation as a critical matter which they had included in its work plan. He added that work would be done with that Committee throughout the year to drive public participation forward.

8.5 The Committee discussed public engagement and the key points to note were: -

8.6 A Member of the Committee was concerned around the time it was taking for the Council to set a clear vision of public participation in Sheffield.

8.7 A Member mentioned there needed to be a clear vision of how the Local Area Committees (LACs) formed part of the new structure. It was added that devolved powers and decision-making responsibilities of the LACs should be looked at again.

The Head of Policy and Partnerships added that the LACs should not be the only way that Sheffield City Council undertook public participation.

8.8 A Member of the Committee referred to the Public Engagement Toolkit. They asked whether a Policy Committee could request a Stakeholder Reference Group in addition to a Task and Finish Group.

The Director of Legal and Governance confirmed that a Stakeholder Reference Group would not be classed as a Policy Committee's one Task and Finish Group.

8.9 A Member suggested that items/decisions that had previously been discussed by other Policy Committees had a record alongside them for Policy Committees to see the path of that item/decision so far. It was suggested that this information was on Policy Committee workplans.

8.10 A Member of the Committee suggested a training session be delivered to all councillors around each of the options on the public engagement toolkit.

The Head of Policy and Partnerships explained this had been mentioned to the Democratic Services Officer involved in Member Development and that a training session would take place around September/October 2022.

8.11 It was mentioned by a Member of the Committee that hard to reach groups should be targeted when looking at public participation across the Council.

8.12 The Chair allowed for a Member of the Public to comment on this Public Engagement Item.

Nigel Slack mentioned the Public Engagement Toolkit was interesting. He believed one reason that had made public engagement more successful was due to The Assistant Director (Governance) having outside knowledge of Sheffield City Council. Therefore, Mr Slack suggested the Committee Co-opted an Independent Member onto the Committee, to provide a similar

outside knowledge, once The Assistant Director (Governance) had left.

The Assistant Director (Governance) added that if the Committee decided to Co-opt an Independent Member, then they should consider Co-opting Officers from other authorities as they would have professional opinions to offer and expertise in Local Authorities and Committee System structures.

- 8.13 **RESOLVED:** That the Committee **(1)** noted the progress made in the work with Involve; **(2)** noted the proposed approach to developing a new vision and approach to participation; and **(3)** noted that Strategy and Resources Committee will lead work on a new vision for participation as part of its work programme.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 9.1 **RESOLVED:** That the Committee agreed to cancel the meeting previously scheduled to take place on the 14 July 2022.
- 9.2 It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 01 September 2022.

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