REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL (SCC)

HOW TO MAKE IMPROVEMENTS TO ITS VISION AND PRACTICE IN PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING BETWEEN ELECTIONS

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Summarising the key findings from reviews
3. Theory, observations and questions
   - 3.1 Two levels of critique
   - 3.2 A theoretical underpinning: types of public participation
   - 3.2 A theoretical underpinning: public participation in decision-making
4. Cross-cutting issues and queries
   - 4.1 Local Area Committees
   - 4.2 Inviting participation
   - 4.3 The relationship between LACs and policy committees
5. Culture: leadership, capacity and practice
   - 5.1 Changing culture
   - 5.2 Learning from case studies
6. Recommended ways forward

Appendix 1: Reviewed reports

Appendix 2: Review of strengths and weaknesses in Sheffield City Council's approach to public participation (May 2022)

1. Case studies of public participation in Sheffield
2. Lessons learned from case studies
   - 2.3 Other factors with a bearing on public participation
   - 2.4 The Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS)
   - 2.5 Traditional democratic systems
   - 2.6 Communication channels
3. Ideas for improvement
4. References

Appendix 3: case studies of public participation in Sheffield

1. Access Liaison Group
2. Clean Air Zone Consultation
3. Community Champion Project
4. Developing Darnall Library
5. Regather's transition to a community benefit society
6. Scrutiny Hate Crime Task Group
7. ShefFood and Sheffield's SFP Bronze Award
8. Supporting the VCFS to engage communities
9. Young People's Experiences of the Covid-19 Pandemic
10. Case studies from State of Sheffield 2020 Report

Appendix 4: Roundtables report - public participation in Sheffield City Council decision-making (March 2022)

1. Introduction

This report makes recommendations to Sheffield City Council (SCC) on how to make improvements to its vision and practice in public participation *in decision-making between elections* (including consultation and more innovative forms of engagement).[1] It draws on work carried out by Involve between Autumn 2021 and June 2022, including:

- report on Strengths and Weaknesses in SCC's current approach to public participation in decision-making (Appendix 2)
- desk research into case studies that SCC and/or others regard as demonstrating good practice in public participation in decision-making in Sheffield (Appendix 3)
- two roundtables with community organisations and other interested parties (December 2021: Appendix 4)[2]
- ongoing discussions and presentations (for example, to SCC Senior Leadership Team and its Governance Committee).

We understand that SCC has done additional work since we completed the above reports, including engagement as part of its review of Local Area Committees (LACs). Findings from this work are not included in this report but will be drawn into any future plans and activities.

In autumn 2021, Sheffield City Council (SCC) invited Involve to help answer the following question, as it related to the new Committee System and LACs:

> *"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."*

SCC's brief to Involve was to:

- ask Sheffielders how they want to engage with the new Committee System and LACs
- design involvement to build and develop relationships that could be used for future engagement work

Following feedback from the roundtables and with SCC's agreement, the brief changed to cover:

- a review of the findings from previous engagement work that collected views from Sheffielders, community organisations and others about SCC's public participation in decision-making practices - to understand the strengths and weaknesses of SCC's approach;
- A review of good practice public participation in decision-making by SCC and others in the city and what could be learnt from it.

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[1] Public participation can be broadly defined as "*the engagement of individuals with the various structures and institutions of democracy, including voting, contacting a political representative, campaigning and lobbying, and taking part in consultations and demonstrations*."

[2] Including papers/reports recommended by roundtable attendees: see Appendix 1.

2. Summarising the key findings from reviews

The findings from the two reviews show a real opportunity for SCC to transform its relationship with Sheffielders and wider communities, and to work with these communities, to answer its key question, which remains:

> "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."

Such a transformation would have wider benefits for SCC and the city. These include:

- improving policy/service design and implementation, including by widening the space for possible options and allowing for more creative and effective solutions
- reducing the likelihood of policies or decisions needing to be changed or reworked at a later stage, creating financial and resource savings and a better experience for Sheffielders
- helping tackle inequalities and inequities in both power and outcomes
- boosting trust and feelings of legitimacy and support for policies
- building collaboration and shared ownership of problems and solutions
- enabling more active, empowered and engaged Sheffielders and communities
- improving community wellbeing
- building mutual understanding and cohesion within and between communities (and between communities and the council)

The two reviews that we have undertaken suggest that there are pockets of good participation practice within SCC but that such practice is not yet the norm across the Council. The reviews do, however, enable us to draw out the principles and attributes underpinning SCC's successful public participation. These, alongside the critique of SCC's current practices, provide a foundation from which SCC can build.

The reviews also highlight a number of issues not directly about public participation in SCC's decision-making, but which do affect its success. These include some significant concerns around the set-up and operation of the LACs, and the experience of Sheffielders when they contact the Council about a service delivery issue or customer request.

3. Theory, observations and questions

This section briefly highlights the key messages from the roundtables and reviews and gives our reflections on what these have told us, and the questions they have raised.

3.1 Two levels of critique

Two critiques are levelled at SCC's current participation practice from the review work we have undertaken and from the insights offered by Sheffielders, community organisations and others who we spoke to. These are connected and relate strongly to participation theory. We outline these critiques and consider their theoretical underpinning in the following sections.

a. A vision for public participation in Sheffield

The first critique came through most strongly at the roundtables and underpinned much of the conversations at these events. SCC is seen as not having:

- A vision for public participation in Sheffield;
- A clear sense of why public participation is seen as valuable;
- An understanding of what SCC's role is in supporting participation to thrive in the city.

The list of benefits *at* the start of Section 2 (above) outline the value SCC and the city could gain from a renewed approach to public participation. They include:

- **Its practical benefits and value**, such as the points around reduced inequalities, improved service design, and financial savings.
- **Its inherent value,** recognising that an informed, active, engaged, and empowered society is a core part of a healthy democracy and valuable in and of itself.

As seen later, we recommend that SCC works internally and with others locally to create a vision for public participation in Sheffield and to establish what SCC's role is in supporting it to thrive.

b. How SCC 'does' public participation in its decision-making

The second critique of SCC's current practice focuses more narrowly on how SCC does public participation *in its own decision-making*. This is the area we looked at in our reviews, which are included in full as appendices to this report.

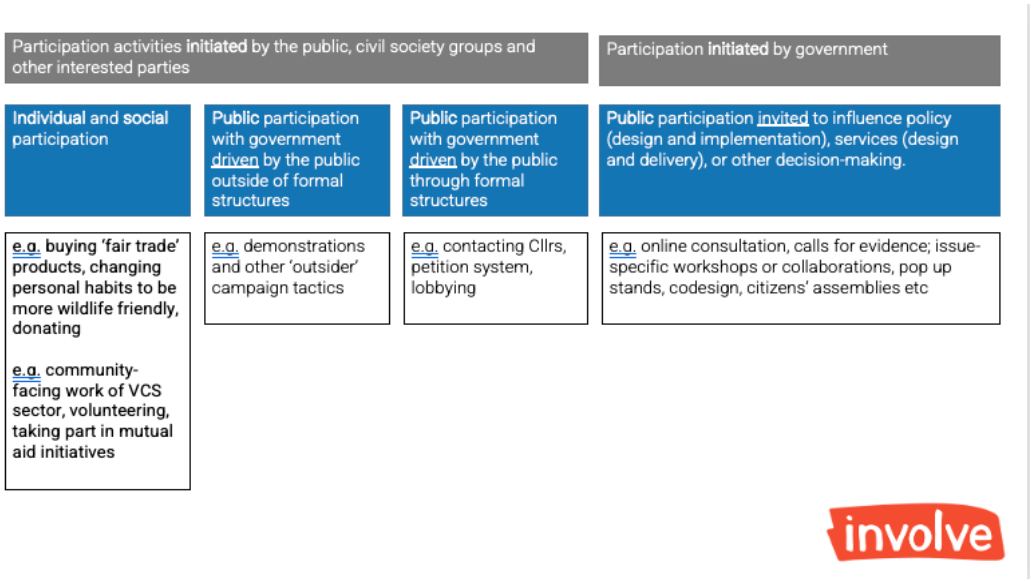
We understand that further, more recent, work done by SCC has reinforced some of the messages from these reviews, suggesting that SCC's challenges around public participation have not been resolved directly by the introduction of the committee system. SCC-led engagement with politicians, council officers, a small number of Sheffielders and interested parties as part of the six-month review of the committee system suggests that public participation is the area where it is felt that least progress has been made. Sheffielders indicated that they don't feel connected to the new Policy Committees.

There is also ongoing concern that the Council lacks the support, capacity or expertise to undertake effective participation work, and recognition that the 'toolkit' introduced to prompt participation approaches through Policy Committees has had limited use[3].

3.2 A theoretical underpinning: types of public participation

It is useful to consider how the two levels of critique of SCC's current approach to participation relate to different aspects of participation theory. In the following four figures, we outline different types of participation and the role that governments - in this case SCC - play in supporting and sustaining them. [4]

Figure 1. Four types of public participation (in blue), that fall under two main categories (in grey).



[3] Of those who responded to the Six Month Review survey, only 17% of Members, 24% of citizens and 41% of officers agree or strongly agreed that the council are delivering the design principle of 'Listening to Everyone'.
[4] Figures 1-4 develop work by Involve for the Scottish Government to help inform its participation framework.

Figure 2. Some of the roles that government plays in relation to these different types of participation.

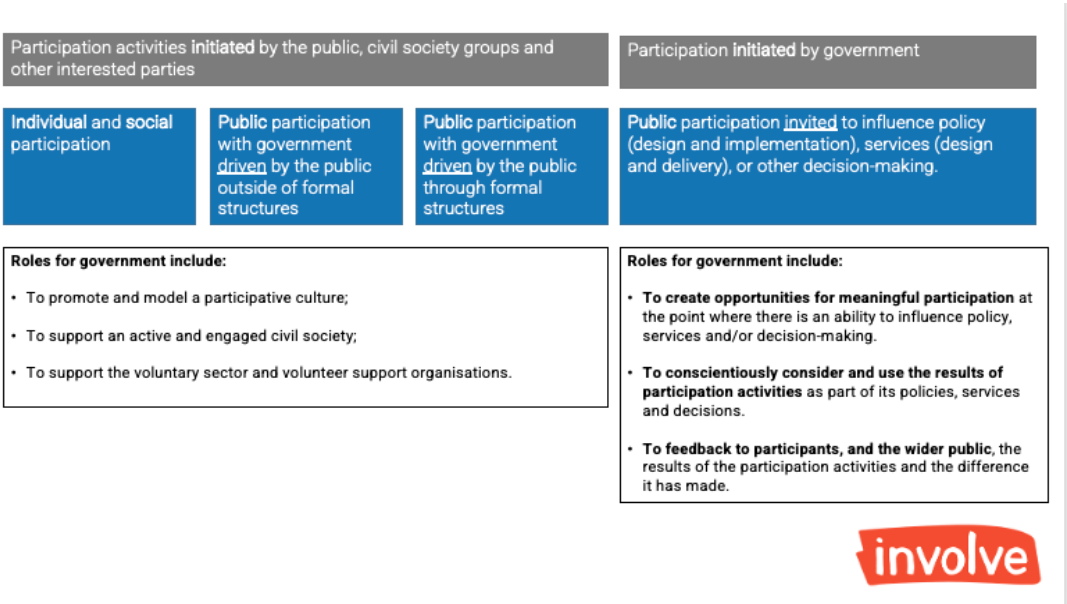


Figure 3. Maps issues raised at roundtables and through reviews against the different types of participation.

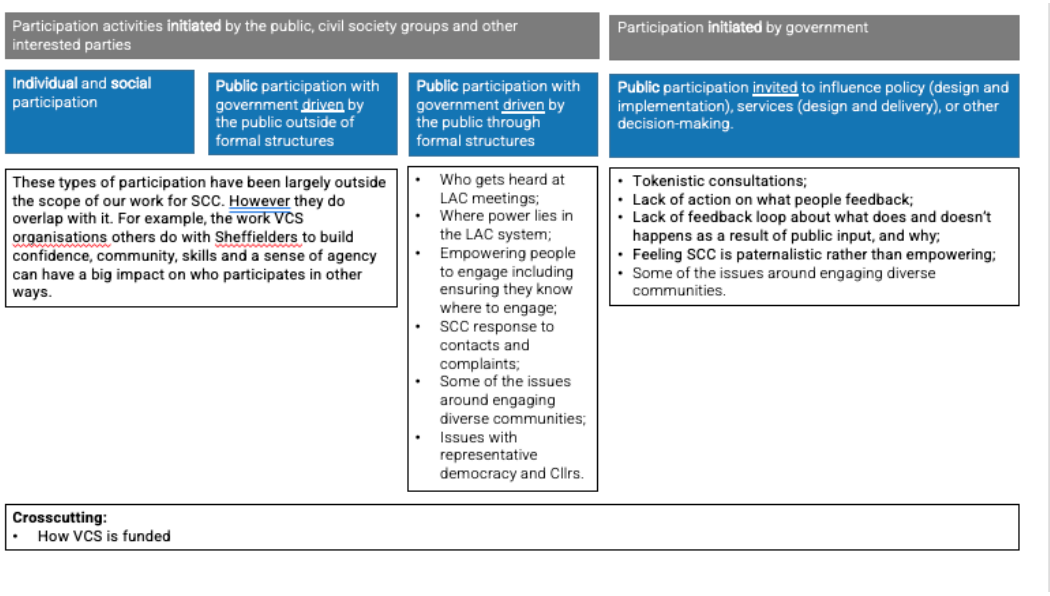
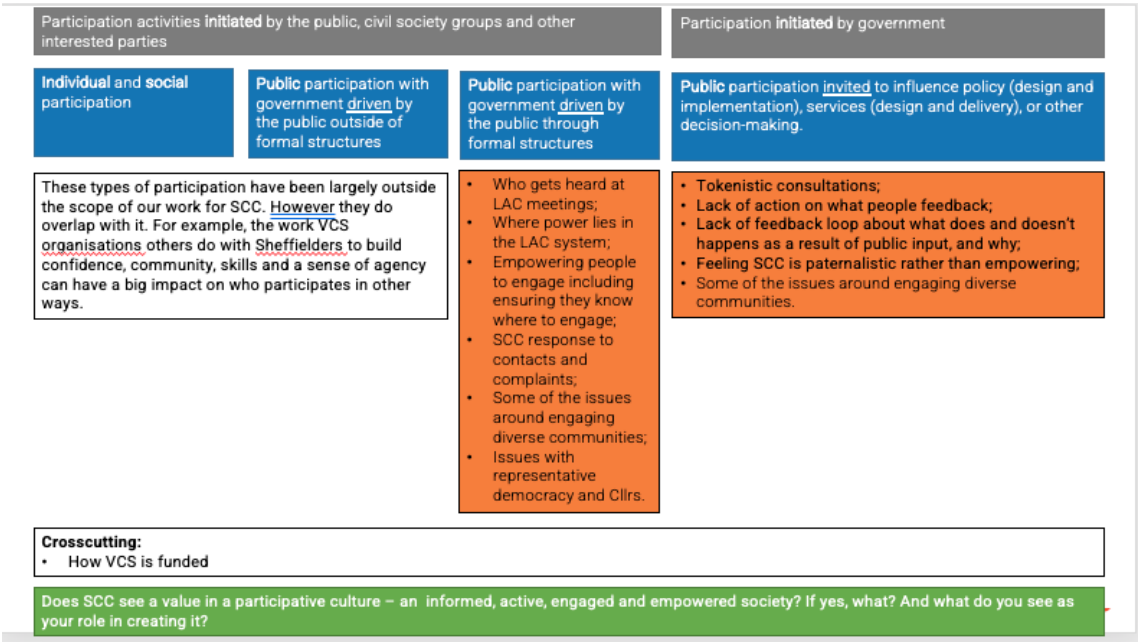


Figure 4. Maps two critiques of SCC current practice against theoretical underpinning. [5]



It is possible to improve SCC's practice in the "orange boxes"[6] separately from looking at the wider question in green. This is perhaps particularly true of the box on the right about participation that SCC invites: SCC does not need to know its wider vision for public participation in the city in order to stop its consultations being (perceived as) tokenistic, for example.

However, in other ways the issues in the orange and green boxes are intertwined. For example, how SCC chooses to resolve some of the issues highlighted in the orange boxes – not least around the LACs and its engagement with diverse communities (as emphasised in the Race Equality Commission report) - might differ depending on its overall vision for public participation in the city.

[5] The green box shows the critique relating to SCC's vision for participation. The orange boxes show the critique relating to SCC's current practice in public participation, focussing on decision-making.

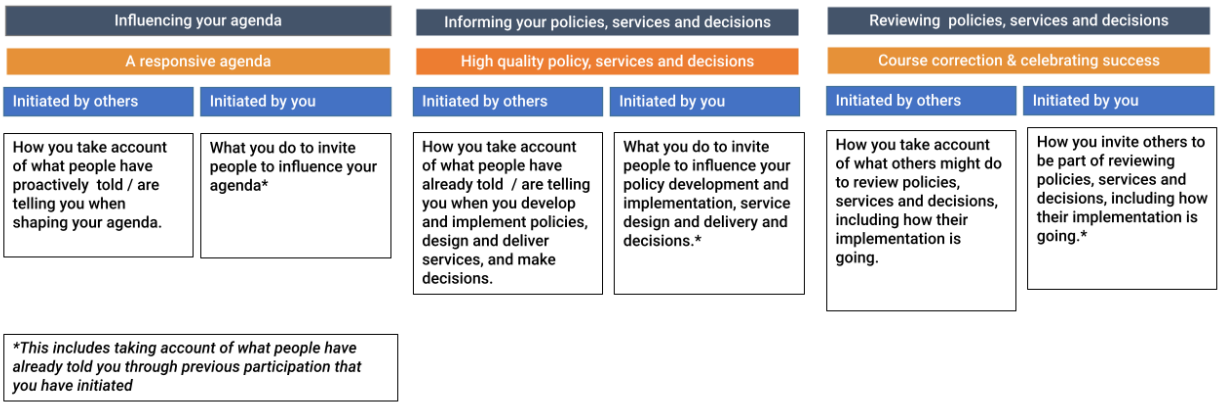
[6] It is worth noting that public participation driven by the public outside of formal structures (Figure 4, second blue box from the left) is also a type of public participation in decision-making. We have not coloured this orange in the figure simply because it has largely been outside of the scope of our work with SCC. It is also less directly within your sphere of influence but is an area that stakeholders and citizens want to see developed – ie. how citizens raise their issues with the council.

3.2 A theoretical underpinning: public participation in decision-making

Figures 1-4 above show the types of public participation. If we focus on the two orange boxes in Figure 4 only, then other parts of participation theory become relevant. As outlined in Figure 5, this suggests that public participation in SCC decision-making should achieve three key impacts:

1. Influencing SCC's agenda;
2. Informing SCC policies, services and decisions – public input can be valuable at many stages, informing strategies, policy or service design, and implementation;
3. Contributing to reviews of policies, services and decisions, including how their implementation is going.

Figure 5. What public participation in decision-making should achieve.



The model in Figure 5 provides an additional lens through which SCC can consider public participation in its decision-making. It raises a number of questions:

- Are these three areas of influence there for Sheffielders, and accessible to them?
- Is that true in relation to the new policy committees, for Local Area Committees, for key policy areas (for example in policy development or policy review) and services?
- How do these different areas of SCC work together to avoid duplication?

There is also an interesting paradox at play in aspirations for participation. At the roundtables, attendees seemed most focussed on how Sheffielders could get issues onto SCC's agenda and get them resolved. In contrast, SCC has talked more to Involve about inviting participation to inform policies, services and decisions already prioritised by the Council.

The above figure shows that both aims are equally legitimate; both are needed and should exist. The two are related: improving participation on SCC priorities will help to develop staff skills (where needed), embed engagement as a practice across the council and provide opportunities to test engagement channels and practices. It may also, as a starting point, provide a low risk means of reassuring those who are less convinced that good engagement has a value and should be part and parcel of standard operations for local authorities.

4. Cross-cutting issues and queries

In addition to the two levels of critique outlined above, several cross-cutting issues have been raised with us or by us during our work with SCC.

4.1 Local Area Committees

Local Area Committees were introduced in Sheffield in May 2021, so are still in their infancy. SCC talks about LACs as an innovation in participation, but this is not what they are. Rather, they provide a different model of governance - albeit one that delegates power closer to the communities they serve - and are part of SCC governance structures. This distinction is important: talking about LACs as innovations in participation may frustrate Sheffielders and VCS organisations in the city and do little to reassure them that SCC understands what needs to change about its participation approach.

That said, LACs do have a relationship with participation. As we understand it, one of the ideas that underpins them at SCC is that making decisions more locally to where people live facilitate participation and Involve agrees with this view. For example:

- Decisions taken by the LAC are closer to where people live, and may therefore seem more relevant;
- Each LAC covers a smaller area than SCC as a whole and therefore has a more manageable job (relatively[7]) in reaching out to those living in its area.

However, these advantages are often considerably overstated and realising them depends on how LACs operate. What will make the most difference to whether people participate is how and when, not just on what, SCC is seeking to engage them, and what role they are being offered. Simply adding a 'traditional' council meeting closer to where people live does not, in and of itself, change much in participation terms. Area Committee Procedure Rules, as presently formulated, do not, for example, allow members of the public to place items on an Area Committee agenda. Nor, crucially, do they refer to or link with the engagement work that would be needed outside of LAC meetings to truly involve the breadth of communities in LACs' work. Simply asking Sheffielders to come to a council meeting, submit a formal question and so on will not increase the quality or value of participation nor increase the number or diversity of Sheffielders who participate.[8]

The Terms of Reference for LACs do refer to engagement, the involvement of local people and to enabling local people to influence Council decisions. This suggests that, whilst LACs are structural

[7] Each LAC still has a very large population to reach.

[8] The exception to this may be where there are active geographically-based VCS organisations. These organisations may be able to offer Sheffielders different ways to engage, with the organisations then feeding what they say into the LACs. For these geographically-based organisations LACs may offer an opportunity to gain a greater voice for the communities they work with. LACs, however, also pose problems for parts of the VCS and for the diversity of Sheffielders: the number of additional new meetings makes it harder for communities of interest that are not geographically based to cover what's happening and organise people to attend; participation in LAC decisions may not therefore be as diverse as it needs to be to lead to good decision-making and indeed may be less diverse than if decisions were taken centrally. This would be problematic for a range of reasons but is also undesirable in purely participation terms.

entities, the intention behind their establishment was, in part, to enable SCC to connect better with its communities and enable a more collaborative approach to agenda-setting and decision-making.

Involve's reviews suggest that changing how SCC engages with Sheffielders would make a difference to the diversity and number of Sheffielders who participate in LACs (as well as more generally). For example, changes should include tailoring engagement approaches to the people LACs want to reach and the topics LACs are engaging around, with a clear path for what Sheffielders and interested parties say to influence decision-making and a feedback loop so that they know what difference their participation has made. This is consistent with national and international good practice. There have been some examples of practice like this around the LACs.[9] However, there are big questions both about whether the LACs have sufficient resources to make this standard practice and whether participation and engagement are embedded in LAC culture. LACs should also be mindful of the three areas of influence outlined in Figure 5 above, and the extent to which they are delivering on them.

Culture, structure and ways of working are not separate, and each has a role to play in encouraging and enabling participation. Whilst LAC meetings currently replicate the structure and culture of a traditional council meeting, where power is centralised with councillors, as noted above, the ToR point to more engagement-friendly opportunities. Newer, good practice forms of participation change, to a greater or lesser extent, where power lies. For example, Sheffielders may be more deeply involved in informing decisions, or they may collaborate with councillors in shaping them, as suggested in the ToR.

A new approach, new structures and new ways of working need not reduce Councillors' own power, though they may change the way that their power operates. Indeed, well considered changes – and enthusiasm for those changes – may increase Councillors' ability to affect the differences they wish to see. Power need not be conceived of as zero sum. By working together, more can usually be achieved. It is notable that initial proposals from the VCS to SCC in response to LACs around Citizen Hubs[10] envisaged a very different, much more empowered role for Sheffielders. Since our reviews, the VCS sector has established a new Collaborative Conversations initiative, with some statutory partner support, to inform work on the City Goals.

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[9] For example, see Case Study 8, Appendix 3.8

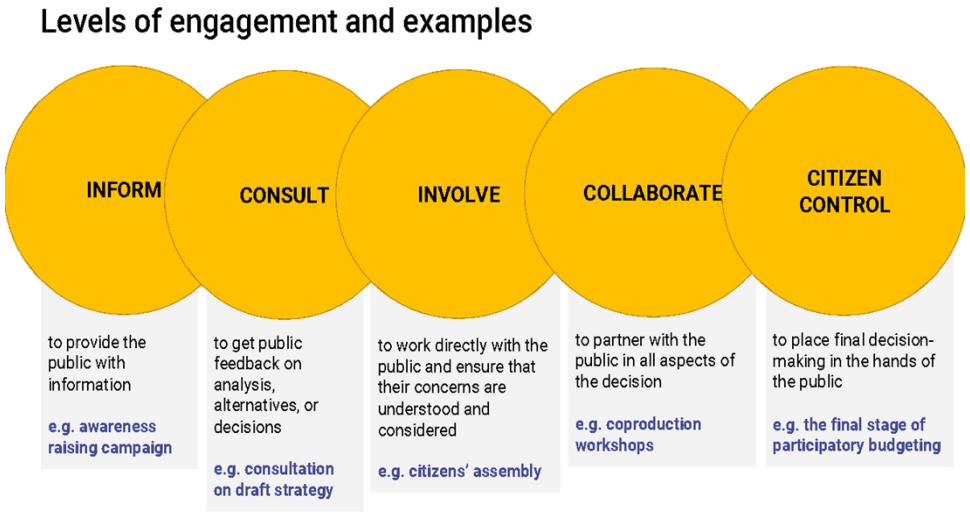
[10] There is much to like about the proposal for Citizen Hubs in terms of the methods it seeks to use, principles that underpin it, and level of power it gives to the public. It would, at least initially, be likely to increase the number and diversity of Sheffielders participating. However, there are also problems with it. Some of these centre around cost and feasibility. There is also a question about the desirability of having what is essentially a completely separate new structure within Sheffield. For example, unless SCC plans to outsource its own engagement to the Hubs, Sheffielders could end up continually being asked about the same issues by two different organisations. This could result in participation fatigue and confusion about who to contact, who works for whom, and where decision-making power lies. There are potential issues too around the Hubs relationship or lack of it to decision-making processes, SCC's own relationship with Sheffielders, representation and accountability. We would reflect that, in general, the Citizen Hubs proposal reads like the authors do not believe SCC itself will move to a different way of doing participation – hence their conclusion that there needs to be what is almost a parallel structure. A more productive way forward would be for SCC to create a joint vision for the future of participation in the city with the VCS and others, and go on to work with them to implement the vision in a way that is joined-up, feasible and linked to decision-making processes. The authors of the Hubs report would be useful and important people to involve in that process.

It is important that SCC recognises what the LACs currently are and are not in relation to participation, in their current form and mode of working. From this starting point you can then make decisions about your preferred way forward.

4.2 Inviting participation

As we have outlined, empowering Sheffielders is about both how SCC takes account of participation initiated by the public and how it invites participation itself. On the latter, we turn attention to a well-known and well-regarded piece of participation theory around levels of engagement, developed by the International Association for Participation (IAP2). Figure 6 looks at the different roles an organisation (in this case SCC) can offer members of the public. All but 'Inform' are examples of roles an organisation can offer members of the public in its decision-making.

Figure 6. IAP2 Levels of Engagement



In figure 7, we show the implicit promise made to participants within each of those levels of engagement: understanding this is crucial to decisions about which level of engagement is appropriate to any given circumstance and to designing specific engagement activities.

Figure 7. Levels of engagement and promises to participants.

None of these levels of engagement are better, in and of themselves, than any of the others and each can be combined with others. For example, one might collaborate with Sheffielders to develop options that address a specific challenge, consult more widely on those options and inform the city as a whole of the outcomes. If SCC wants to increase the diversity and number of Sheffielders who participate then it needs at least to offer the 'involve' role to Sheffielders (for example, more than 'inform' or 'consult') on a regular basis. Involvement would need to run alongside mechanisms and processes for taking account of participation initiated by the public.

4.3 The relationship between LACs and policy committees

The remit of LACs was an issue raised during our reviews, with some suggesting that LACs are adopting local plans that differ from central strategies and hence may not be deliverable. If this is the case, it is a wider issue than that addressed in this paper. However, it does have consequences for participation work:

- **Scope**: Participation work should have a clear scope. When LACs engage their local populations they should be clear what is within their remit and what is outside of it, in order to set realistic expectations about what change is possible and to help ensure the input they receive from members of the public is relevant to them (see below). This clarity also helps Sheffielders to understand what different parts of SCC do and don't do. On issues outside of their remit, LACs need to be clear each time they engage whether they don't want input on these topics, or whether they do want input with the intention of raising any key issues with the relevant central committees and teams. Again, being clear about this with Sheffielders helps to manage expectations and keep feedback relevant.
- **Managing expectations and building trust**: Clarity of scope is important in order to manage public expectations and build trust. Members of the public tend to appreciate and accept honesty about scope, whereas creating unrealistic expectations often causes problems further down the line.

- **Link to decision-making and consultation fatigue**: If LACs do want to engage Sheffielders on issues beyond their remit, LACs and relevant policy committees and teams need to be joined up. This could happen while the engagement is being designed so that central teams have some input to the scope of the engagement and questions asked, and also know the engagement is happening. At the very least, LAC consultation responses need to be kept in a central space and appropriately tagged so that central teams can draw on them as relevant, rather than having to ask Sheffielders the same questions again. This join-up could also happen the other way round, with LACs able to input to or access relevant results from Sheffield-wide consultations. This will help avoid consultation fatigue – where Sheffielders are constantly bombarded with requests for input and stop participating.

It seems likely that SCC will need to cover the issues above in guidance for LAC staff, Councillors and relevant central teams, if it is not already included.

5. Culture: leadership, capacity and practice

5.1 Changing culture

To address the critiques we outlined earlier in this report and answer the question posed at the start of this document will require change. Fundamentally, it will demand a culture in which engagement is embedded as an everyday way of working. Culture change in turn requires clear leadership (of the right kind) and a vision for engagement, its role and what it seeks to achieve. SCC will need to demonstrate, through senior drive and ownership, its commitment to a participatory culture, recognising its value and embracing its principles.

Culture change will also require an appropriate work plan underpinned by strategic thinking about how best to bring about change[11], and sufficient staff time to deliver the plan over a period of around 2-3 years, at least initially.

It will also require attention to the capacity required to effect these changes and for SCC to become a council where participation is seen as part and parcel of everyday practice, across all its operations.

5.2 Learning from case studies

In this final section, prior to making recommendations, we draw out the headline lessons from the case studies, including what worked well and what worked less well.[12]

- **Publicise public engagement opportunities:** engagement activities are more effective when coupled with high quality broad and targeted communications to connect with communities. Using networks and representative organisations is vital, based on good initial mapping. .
- **Work collaboratively with others:** public participation can be strengthened by partnership working with local organisations and individuals who have existing knowledge and are already trusted by local people.
- **Tailor approach to audience:** use engagement methods that work for the communities and Sheffielders you're trying to reach. Be flexible, don't stick rigidly to one method if you're not reaching your target audiences.
- **Engage marginalised communities and individuals:** prioritise communities and individuals whose voices are less often, if ever, heard.
- **Dedicate sufficient resources and staff:** financial constraints are evident, however, effective, sustained and good quality engagement can help to improve outcomes and result in efficiencies over the longer term, so it is worth resourcing appropriately.
- **Engage upstream of decisions**: Engage Sheffielders early in the decision-making process,

[11] For example, the best way to support changing internal practices and cultures may be to work with the most willing teams internally to trial new approaches, and then really celebrate and shout about their successes to encourage other teams to come onboard. Or another approach may be more likely to work. This is a strategic decision that we can advise on, but that someone internally needs to own and follow-through.

[12] More detail is included in Appendix 3.

allowing time for thoughtful analysis and for input to shape options or solutions. Make the scope for influence clear. This will help to ensure that decisions effectively address the needs and concerns of Sheffield's diverse communities.

- **Mechanism for impact:** Ensure it is clear how the results of engagement work will feed back into the decision-making process in a timely and effective way. This is essential to ensure Sheffielders' views are heard and the results of engagement used and responded to and the impacts tracked. Some case studies had formal mechanisms for feeding back findings to decision-makers, however others felt this element was a weakness.
- **Bring politicians and Sheffielders together**: People value processes where Councillors and Sheffielders come together to discuss issues, and there's a constructive space for politicians to listen to the views of Sheffield's diverse communities. The Access Liaison Group case study illustrates the value of cross-party councillors and people with disabilities meeting regularly to inform plans.
- **Have a feedback loop:** Communicate the results of an engagement project to those who took part and to Sheffielders more widely c. Let people know what has - and, as importantly, has not - happened because of their involvement, and why. This was considered very important by VCS organisations and others who contributed to the case studies and came through as a limitation of some of the projects.
- **Involve citizens in monitoring and review**, to ensure policies and programmes are effective at achieving their intended outcomes.
- **Define terminology:** When researching these case studies, it became apparent that there is not always a common language for discussing public participation in decision-making. Creating a common language in collaboration with others will help to avoid confusion as the Council takes forward its work in this area.

Many of these findings are consistent with the findings and recommendations from our review of the strengths and weaknesses of SCC's current practice in public participation in decision-making.

6. Recommended ways forward

The preceding sections have highlighted two main questions: what is SCC's vision for engagement and participation and, how can Sheffield City Council enhance its existing practice? These questions follow from the two critiques outlined earlier in this document and inform our recommendations for action.[13]

Recommendation 1. Develop a vision for engagement/participation and a plan to embed that vision in working culture across the Council.

Following this recommendation would require senior leaders in SCC to be ready for the conversations that need to be had to develop - and enact - a vision for participation. We have noted earlier the range of benefits - practical, democratic, financial - that effective engagement can bring. Realising these benefits would require:

- Adequate resources to support those who are leading development of the vision, with small amounts of time for other officers to input as and when needed (particularly those most affected by its work)
- Early and then light touch ongoing participation of senior leaders and Councillors in the work, so that they input to and are onboard with the vision created. This includes a willingness to think differently about the approaches SCC could take
- Working collaboratively with VCS, faith organisations, statutory and non-statutory partners, and Sheffielders to develop and test the vision
- A parallel piece of work to explore the structures, practices and/or resources required to embed the vision and its implications culturally and practically throughout the Council, with an emphasis on what is realistic, effective, proportionate, and provides best value for money

Developing a vision for engagement/participation is just a first step. Over the longer-term, effective, empowering and impactful engagement between SCC, Sheffielders and the VCS requires culture change within the Council. Engagement should become part of business as usual, with staff at all levels understanding its value and importance.

A vision for public participation in the city cannot and should not be created by SCC alone. Many organisations have valuable perspectives and expertise to bring to questions of public participation in Sheffield. They will also be crucial to realising and implementing the vision created. SCC will therefore need to take a collaborative approach. Much of the good engagement and participation work in which SCC is involved draws its value and strength from partnership and collaborative work.

Collaboration comes with a promise to those involved – that SCC is entering the process in good faith, ready to listen to and act on what is produced. To start this sort of process and then not follow through on it would do further damage to SCC and its relationships, confirming the VCS' negative opinions of the

[13] We should note that Involve is not necessarily in a position to support SCC with all work involved in both recommendations. Conversations with SCC in the latter part of 2022 and early 2023 have focused on addressing recommendation 2.

Council. If the internal recognition of what this piece of work means and the buy-in needed to act on its results isn't there, then it shouldn't be undertaken.

Recommendation 2. Develop, grow and enhance existing engagement and participation practice

The second recommendation has two elements. The first focuses on understanding more about current practice across the Council, including where expertise, skills, capacity, confidence and appetite for engagement and participation currently lie. As we have learned from the small number of case studies we have reviewed, there is good practice already within SCC - and there will no doubt be more that we have been unable to include in our review or that has developed in the time since the review took place. We are aware that SCC has already begun some of this mapping work, with plans for a baseline survey and wider discussions with SCC staff underway. Learning from this work should inform decisions about next steps. For example, where and on what to focus the training sessions and on how to situate engagement and participation within SCC: for example, is there a need for a centre of excellence? How are skills communicated and developed across the Council as a whole?

The training programme would involve SCC staff and place an emphasis on participation theory and the core skills needed to put this into practice, consistently and intelligently. Training might also be supported by mentoring. This might be particularly valuable for more senior staff charged with supporting those planning and carrying out engagement and participation activities.

A second strand of work falling under recommendation two is the development of an engagement framework. This would need to be done in a collaborative way, involving wider interested parties (for example, those involved in previous work). A collaborative approach has two benefits. The first is that it demonstrates a willingness to listen and learn from the communities and organisations whose input to decision-making is sought. Second, it helps to ensure that the engagement framework developed embeds that collaborative approach and works for both internal and external audiences, drawing on the knowledge and expertise of both.

Appendix 1: Reviewed reports

The following reports were reviewed as part of this work. This list includes those recommended by attendees at the two roundtables.

- Opus Independents Ltd (2021) Citizen Hubs

- It's Our City! (2020) Commentary and evidence. From 'strong leader' to more democratic modern committee governance in Sheffield - community perspectives
- Sheffield City Council (2020) Big City Conversation Survey
- Sheffield City Council (2021) Local Area Committee Community Survey
- Sheffield City Partnership (2020) State of Sheffield 2020 Report
- Sheffield Race Equality Commission (2021) Interim update[14]
- VAS (2018) Sheffield State of the Voluntary and Community Sector
- Involve roundtable draft report and stakeholder interviews (2021/2022)
- Researching cases of public participation in Sheffield (2022)

[14] Note that a final report has since been issued. This can be found at https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/your-city-council/race-equality-commission.

Appendix 2: Review of strengths and weaknesses in Sheffield City Council's approach to public participation (May 2022)

From the materials reviewed, it is not easy to find broad, city-wide strengths in the Council's approach to public participation in decision-making. However, at an individual project level, strengths can be identified in the Council's (and other organisations') approach to public participation. The materials also highlight the existing strengths in Sheffield's communities and the desire amongst many Sheffielders to get more involved in local decision-making.

1. Case studies of public participation in Sheffield

At the stakeholder workshop, it was recommended that case studies of good practice in public participation in Sheffield be developed to inform future engagement work. This section brings together examples of public participation in Sheffield that have strong elements to them which have been suggested by Council officers and stakeholders. The review was not comprehensive - deliberately so - and there will undoubtedly be examples of good practice not included amongst the case studies.

As with any engagement work, the projects also faced challenges. Drawing on both the strengths and the challenges, the case studies provide valuable lessons for future participation and engagement work. They include: projects led by the Council, projects led by the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS), and partnership projects. The full write-ups of these case studies, which are based on conversations with Council officers and VCS organisations, can be found in Appendix 2.

- **Access Liaison Group (ongoing)** is a pan-disability group, which operates independently and symbiotically with the Council. The group enables SCC to fulfil its duty under the Equality Act 2010 by ensuring that consultation includes the views of disabled people; and that this is not left to chance through a general consultation process which may fail to capture them. It is attended by disabled people, cross party politicians and is supported by Council officers and an independent Chair. ALG offers the independent view of disabled people in order to improve the ability of disabled people to fully participate in the life of the city.
- **Clear Air Zone consultation (2019)**. A key strength was the strong multi-channel communications campaign, which made it easy for Sheffielders to notice and respond to the Clean Air Zone consultation. The approach included targeted engagement with some of the people who would be most affected by the proposed changes, such as taxi drivers.
- **Community Champion Project (2021 - ongoing),** which is led by the VCS and funded by the Council, empowers communities to make informed choices on health and wellbeing. Trusted volunteers provide information and listen to people's concerns in informal settings. The current focus is Covid-19 and vaccines, though volunteers support a number of issues. This model avoids the mistrust many communities feel towards institutions. The concerns and needs raised by communities are fed back to decision-makers.
- **Developing Darnall Library, phase one (2018).** Funded by the One Project Estate initiative, this project explored the proposition of Darnall's library as a community hub. A key strength was the approach taken, which involved in depth verbatim interviews with local residents, which staff were trained to co-deliver. Although the project halted after the first phase, and the impact has

been minimal, the methodology used provided rich insights on people's concerns and aspirations, and was a novel approach for the Council.

- **Scrutiny Hate Crime Task Group (2017)**. A collaboration between a cross-party Hate Crime Task Group (set up by the Safety Community Scrutiny Committee) and the Equality Hub Network enabled targeted engagement with communities affected by hate crime. This informed recommendations to the Scrutiny Committee and subsequent steps taken by the Council and stakeholders to address hate crime.
- **Supporting the VCS to engage citizens (2021)**. As part of setting LACs' priorities, the Council supported over 40 local organisations to have conversations with Sheffielders who are less likely to have their voices heard. This was part of a suite of engagement activities (e.g. an online survey, drop in meetings) and enabled a diversity of community voices to feed into the development of each LAC's local action plan.
- **ShefFood (2009 - ongoing)** is a cross-sector partnership of local public agencies, businesses, academic and community organisations committed to working together to create a more sustainable and resilient food system for the Sheffield region. Although it is not an example of public participation, it shows what can be achieved through an effective long term strategic partnership.
- **Young people's experiences of the Covid-19 pandemic (2021).** An online survey of secondary level children provided an insight into the lives of young people. Steps were taken to encourage honest feedback such as making the survey anonymous. The findings have fed into various Council plans.

A few respondents to the Local Area Committee (LAC) survey [2] also make general positive remarks about the Council's efforts to engage and communicate with Sheffielders, such as the Council's e-bulletin. A few also express appreciation for Council staff who have supported them.

In addition to the case studies we have reviewed for this report, Appendix B lists projects from the State of Sheffield report that formed part of Sheffield's response to Covid-19. We did not review these projects for this report, as they are not examples of public participation. However, they are likely to provide interesting insights and ideas which could inform future engagement work, such as strategies for communicating with different groups of people. They also highlight the important role the VCS can play in reaching communities that most need the Council's help.

2. Lessons learned from case studies

Drawing on what worked well and what worked less well in the case studies, a number of key lessons stand out for this report:

Publicise public engagement opportunities: It is important to raise awareness of opportunities for Sheffielders to take part in public participation exercises, otherwise it can be hard to reach people who don't already regularly engage. The communications strategy was a key strength of the Clean Air Zone

consultation.

Work collaboratively with others: Public participation can be strengthened by working in partnership with local organisations and individuals who have existing knowledge and are already trusted by local people. This lesson comes through in the Community Champion project which is a partnership between the Council and the VCS working with local people, and the Hate Crime Task Group which collaborated with the Equality Hub Network to reach target audiences.

Use approaches that suit your audience(s): Use engagement methods that work for the communities and Sheffielders you're trying to reach. Be flexible, don't stick rigidly to one method if you're not reaching your target audiences. A number of the case studies proactively reached out to their target communities in their spaces, such as going to schools to hear the views of young residents.

Engage less heard voices: It is important to prioritise communities and Sheffielders who aren't normally heard. Some projects demonstrated creative ways of reaching less heard voices, for example one project supported VCF groups to engage less heard voices and to feedback views.

Sufficiently resource and staff projects: It is clear from the case studies that dedicated and skilled people, working in the Council, the VCS and in communities, are at the heart of projects that work well. However, based on the lessons from some of the case studies, it is important to make sure you sufficiently resource projects (£ and people), giving due consideration to how follow up will happen and, where needed, how projects will be sustained. Whilst the current cost of living will place additional burdens on already tight council resources, good participation and engagement can help to ensure that available resources are targeted most effectively and efficiently and help to improve outcomes for communities and individuals.

Engage early on: Engage Sheffielders early on in the decision-making process, when their input can shape solutions. It is too late by the time it comes to a decision being made or approved. This will help to ensure that decisions effectively address the needs and concerns of Sheffield's diverse communities. It is also vital to keep talking so that policies and programmes are reviewed with citizens to ensure they are effective at achieving their intended outcomes.

Mechanism for impact: Have a mechanism for feeding Sheffielders' views / the result of engagement to the Council and decision-makers, so that Sheffielders' views have been heard and responded to and impacts can be tracked. Some case studies had formal mechanisms for feeding back findings to decision-makers, however others felt this element was a weakness.

Bring politicians and Sheffielders together: People value processes where Councillors and Sheffielders come together to discuss issues, and there's a constructive space for politicians to listen to the views of Sheffield's diverse communities. The Access Liaison Group case study illustrates the value of cross-party councillors and people with disabilities meeting regularly to inform plans.

Have a feedback loop: Communicate the results of an engagement project to those who took part and to the wider public. Let people know what has - and, as importantly, has not - happened as a result of their involvement, and why. This was considered very important by stakeholders who contributed to the case studies and came through as a limitation of some of the projects.

Define terminology: When researching these case studies, it became apparent that there is not always a common language for discussing public participation in decision-making. Creating a common language in collaboration with others will help to avoid confusion as the Council takes forward its work in this area.

2.1 Many Sheffielders are/would like to be involved in local issues

The 'It's Our City! Paper [3] talks about the strengths inherent in Sheffield's local communities and the contributions they make to their local neighbourhoods. This is reflected in the Big City Conversation survey [4], which found that almost 40% of Sheffielders said they get involved in local issues. However, there is significant variation across the city, ranging from 50% of respondents in Nether Edge & Sharrow wanting to engage on local issues, compared to around 20% in East Ecclesfield.

A few respondents in [2] also mention Sheffield's community spirit. One person mentions a "significant willing and untapped resource" in the community for voluntary action and engagement. Another person reflects that a chain reaction occurs when the diversity of local people work together to create change.

Many Sheffielders would like to be more involved in decisions that affect their local area, particularly when it's an issue that matters to them - City, Broomhill and Hillsborough wards had the largest proportion of people who'd like to get involved, and only 3% across the city said they wouldn't be willing to get involved [4].

The State of Sheffield report [5] discusses the devastating impact Covid has had on communities, and provides examples where communities, neighbours, the VCS and the Council have pulled together to support Sheffielders, especially those most impacted by the pandemic. In [2] a respondent also reflects "...COVID has probably increased community spirit, there have been lots of offers of support and people have been around the area more so have communicated more."

Although this section does not speak directly to the Council's current approach to public participation in decision-making, it shows there is a strong foundation of community involvement and interest in getting more involved that the Council can build upon.

2.2 Weaknesses in the Council's approach to public participation

While there are pockets of good practice to build from, the overall thrust of the materials reviewed for this paper were critical of the Council's approach to public participation in decision-making. They highlight a number of weaknesses in the Council's approach to public participation, from the perspective of Sheffielders.

a. Lack of meaningful public participation in decision-making

A number of interrelated factors, which are listed below, contribute to a scepticism that public engagement will have a genuine impact on Council decision-making. The majority of Sheffielders who responded to a recent survey [4] do not feel they can influence decisions affecting their local area:

- **Not being listened to**: The case studies suggest that Sheffielders feel the Council "does not listen to them and is not interested in listening to them" [2, 3]. Rather than listening and engaging Sheffielders in a shared endeavour, some feel that the Council is too remote and that decisions are driven by party political interest rather than local residents' concerns. Some feel that the Council is paternalistic.

- **Tokenistic consultations:** When Sheffielders are given an opportunity to participate, it can feel like it is tokenistic [6]. Local people and stakeholders express concern that the Council is consulting people at too late a stage, when decisions have already broadly been made. Some also feel there is a lack of public participation that involves real co-design, co-production [6] and deliberation [2] with communities. In addition to the evidence reviewed here, this message was also heard strongly from citizens and stakeholders who engaged in the Transition to the Committee System work.
- **Lack of impact**: People are sceptical that public participation projects have a real impact on the Council's decision-making [2, 3] and the majority of people who do get involved doubt their effort and time will make a difference [4]. A feeling that their involvement won't have any influence is a reason why some Sheffielders don't get involved in local issues [4]. Some Sheffielders express frustration that they see no action, whether in response to a consultation or a specific concern they have raised with the Council [2].
- **Lack of feedback**: Stakeholders express frustration that there is no formal feedback loop, which is believed to be a contributing factor in Sheffielders feeling participation has no impact [6]. Concern is expressed that the Council makes generalised claims about what has happened as a result of a consultation, rather than providing specific feedback backed with evidence of impact [3]. The Council also does not provide feedback on its rationale when it decides *not* to take forward recommendations from engagement work.
- **Lack of routine engagement in scrutiny and city-wide policies**. A number of Sheffielders [2] call for more openness and engagement on city wide policies, not just local issues. One of the papers reviewed [3] also argues there is not enough routine, direct participation by Sheffielders in Council decision-making and scrutiny, reflecting that only being able to ask 'public questions' at committee meetings is not adequate public engagement.

It is clear the Council will face challenges in delivering public participation that Sheffielders believe will have a real impact on decision-making, given past experiences and the issues outlined. However, in the 'next steps' section of The State of Sheffield report [5], it is acknowledged that engagement needs to have a real impact on decision-making: "Building strong community engagement relationships and pathways: people need to feel their views and experiences can really make an impact."

b. Issues relating to how Sheffield's diverse communities are engaged

A number of sources [2, 7, 8] raise issues relating to how Sheffield's diverse communities are engaged and whether engagement activities are reflective of Sheffield's population.

- **Dominance of more proactive voices.** Some stakeholders worry that engagement is: "too middle class, educated" [8]. One Sheffielder [2] reflects that "only a tiny minority of residents - 'usual suspects' - have access to decision-making". There is a sense that the "silent majority has given up", leaving those who are more proactive, or who have comparatively more resources, to engage with the Council [3,8].
- **Under representation of some communities.** There has been an under-representation of people from less affluent areas of Sheffield and from BAME communities in responses to some Council

consultations. However, examples can also be found of approaches to engagement that have resulted in projects that are more reflective of the local population.

- **The Race Equality Interim Report [7] describes a disconnection between service providers and Sheffield's BAME communities, noting:** "a failure to engage effectively with diverse communities, language and interpreter limitations, or simply due to lack of cultural knowledge." [15]

- **Stakeholders [8] also describe how people from different ethnic minority groups are incorrectly grouped together**; for example, people from different countries in Africa being treated as representative of each other. Relatedly, some stakeholders noted that language choices for materials and events can unnecessarily limit participation to people from certain countries when more widely spoken languages could have been used.

- **Approaches to improve engagement.** Case studies shed light on more effective ways of engaging Sheffield's diverse communities. For example, the Community Champion project and the Hate Crime Task Group, each developed strategies to reach out more effectively to Sheffield's diverse communities.

c. Lack of awareness about services and how decisions are made

For Sheffielders to be able to engage in the Council's decision-making, they need to know how to take part. Currently, Sheffielders do not feel adequately informed about how decisions are made in their local area or how local public services are performing, and they feel poorly informed about the Council's work overall [4]. Stakeholders [8] emphasise the importance of Sheffielders understanding how they can influence the Council's work, commenting that "knowledge is power". One recommendation is for an easy read guide about the Council, what it does and how Sheffielders can have a say. Stakeholders also talked about how this content could be communicated as part of engagement work, with the additional benefit that this would make engagement work less purely extractive.

2.3 Other factors with a bearing on public participation

The data analysed for this paper highlighted other factors that may have a bearing on Sheffielders' willingness or ability to participate in Council led engagement exercises. They are not explicit strengths or weaknesses in the Council's current approach, but provide a backdrop to the Council's efforts to improve public participation in decision-making.

a. Disconnect between Sheffielders and the Council

Stakeholders comment on a lack of trust in the Council [8] and a strong feeling of disconnection between Sheffielders and the Council [3]. They call on the Council to "*make an effort to restore trust*" and to build relationships with communities through listening and acting on what they hear. The Community Champions case study, which is led by Sheffield's voluntary sector in partnership with the Council, illustrates one way to engage with communities who may distrust government institutions.

[15] The final report from the independent commission on racism and racial disparities in Sheffield has been published since this report was drafted, and can be found here.

Some Sheffielders refer to what happened during the tree campaign and the impact this has had on relations between the council and communities, and between communities, for example [2]: "*This area has been ruined by the trees debacle. Many neighbours no longer connect - there is much animosity as a result of the way the council mishandled the removal of healthy trees*."

A slightly separate but related issue are the difficulties Sheffielders can face in trying to communicate with the Council about specific problems [2]. Whilst this is not directly related to the question of citizen participation in decision-making, it does speak to the wider culture and perceptions of how citizen-focused SCC is and how well connected it is to the communities it services. These include:

- Difficulties getting through to an appropriate person when calling the Council.
- Receiving email responses that aren't helpful, for example: "It's hard to feel you're listened to when email replies from the council are anonymous and the contact details aren't for the team involved."
- Problems getting complaints addressed." I am very disappointed at the lack of response when a complaint is sent to the council, they are either ignored or I am sent an email saying someone will contact me by a certain date and then no replies just left to wonder. Very poor communication and responses."

As previously mentioned, a few Sheffielders are also positive about their interactions with specific Council officers.

b. Sheffield's Local Area Committees

Although some Sheffielders are positive about the introduction of LACs, both stakeholders and local residents have strong concerns about them too.[16]

Aspirations for Local Area Committees

A few Sheffielders and stakeholders express their hopes for LACs:

- **Positive for local areas**. A few Sheffielders [2] are pleased that the LACs have been created and hope they will result in positive changes in the local areas.
- **Better conversations**. Some [2] are hopeful that the LACs will result in more effective engagement with local people and better conversations between local people, the Council and Councillors.
- **High quality LAC managers**. Some stakeholders [6] had praise for some high-quality LAC Managers and noted that LACs will be positive for place based interests: "The more local decision-making is, the better the decisions you get."

c. Issues relating to Local Area Committees

However, there is a sense of frustration and missed opportunity around the introduction of LACs to date and strong concerns about their implementation. The irony of introducing a new system to improve public

[16] It should be noted here at this work was done in the first year following initial introduction of LACs, which, like any governance structure, will require time to bed in and be an ongoing process of learning and improvement.

participation in decision-making, without proper engagement about what those changes should be, is not lost on stakeholders. Some feel it shows the Council does not understand the issues that led to the referendum.

Issues relating to the introduction of LACs [2, 6, 8]:

- **Communities of interest.** Stakeholders raise significant concerns about the implications of LACs for communities of interest, including people with protected characteristics. These concerns relate both to whether these interests can be effectively represented through LACs, and to the implications of any lack of representation on the decisions then made - and the subsequent consequences for people's lives.
- **Community involvement and influence at LAC level.** LACs are constitutionally formed and membership comprises elected members of the four wards a LAC covers. Community involvement in informing and shaping decisions at LAC level needs to improve, and perhaps further decisions devolved from the centre.
- **Attendance that is reflective of communities.** People worry that meetings will be dominated by the loudest, who are confident in asking public questions, rather than being reflective of the diversity of local people. It is felt that not enough thought has gone into making LACs comfortable for 'ordinary' Sheffielders, including people with disabilities and vulnerable communities, and as a result LAC priorities are not being informed by their concerns. This issue is likely to be exacerbated by VCS groups who work with diverse and vulnerable communities not having the capacity and resources to observe all LAC meetings.
- **Accessibility.** There is concern that LACs have not yet been planned with accessibility front-of-mind. For example, BSL interpreters and hearing loops for people who are deaf and hearing impaired, and meeting design that is inclusive for people who are neuro diverse. Some reflect that improving accessibility, such as producing easy read materials, helps everyone. Making meetings hybrid, so people can participate online or offline, is considered of paramount importance.
- **Effectiveness and format of meetings.** People worry how meetings will be run. One person describes attending a meeting which was chaotic, poorly prepared and badly chaired. Another is concerned that the format is too formal and reflective of council meetings, which will be off-putting for most people.
- **Concerns relating to costs**. There is a general feeling that LACs are an expensive system. One person notes, somewhat inaccurately as there are seven committees, that "£1.3m spent on five area committees holding 3 meetings a year is almost £87,000 per meeting." Others worry that the £100k budget allocated to each LAC to tackle local issues won't be enough.
- **Competition and equity between LACs.** A few Sheffielders and stakeholders are concerned about the potential for competition between LACs, including between LACs controlled by different political parties. One person fears it is "pitting richer neighbourhoods against poorer ones" and worries that it could exacerbate inequalities and encourage nimbyism. There is concern that giving all LACs the same budget isn't equitable, given that some areas will be in greater need than others.

- **Aggregate themes and issues that straddle LACs.** Place based foras are recognised as a positive way to address specific local needs, but some worry that LACs will become silos. Stakeholders recommend that consideration is given to how emerging aggregate themes will be identified and addressed at city-wide level. Some also query how issues that straddle LACs will be addressed.
- **Issues of scope and the relationship to central decision-making:** There is some concern that LACs are agreeing priorities without reference to the reality of central strategies, budgets and work, and that they are thus raising unrealistic expectations. Relatedly, it seems likely that LACs are engaging the public on issues that go beyond their powers without being explicit with the public about what these limits are. Again, this could raise unrealistic expectations, followed by feelings of disillusionment with SCC.
- **Making decisions by committee.** A few Sheffielders are worried LACs will delay decision-making: "The danger of government by committee is that there is no one to take clear and decisive action and nothing is ever resolved."

Further suggestions for improving LACs

Other suggestions how to improve LACs include:

- Define the remit and scope of LACs, and what change they can actually effect;
- Don't base LAC meetings in one place, move them around and vary the times and days so they fit with peoples' different work/home commitments;
- Have walkabouts on estates so LAC members meet local people and see what is happening on the ground;
- Work out how communities of interest can be supported to engage with LACs, whilst also having a voice on strategic city-wide decisions;
- Explore running citizen hubs alongside the LACs, working with local groups and individuals to make sure the reach is as wide as it can be;
- Introduce meetings of local VCS organisations to inform the work of the LACs, building for example from structures that previously existed in the east of the city which Council officers and Councillors sometimes attended;
- Allocate LAC development officers to provide research and oversight for action plans and to link with Council departments

2.4 The Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS)

Sheffield's diversity of VCS organisations can play an important role in supporting public participation in decision-making, in addition to having a voice in Council decision-making in their own right. But many feel the Council is not listening or effectively engaging them. In this section we explore these issues.

VCS groups can be well placed to be a bridge between the citizens they serve / advocate for and the Council. Their role can range from representing the views of communities they serve, to facilitating contact with them.

Figure 1 depicts the distinction between public and stakeholder engagement, and the overlap where the VSC sector can support public participation in decision-making.

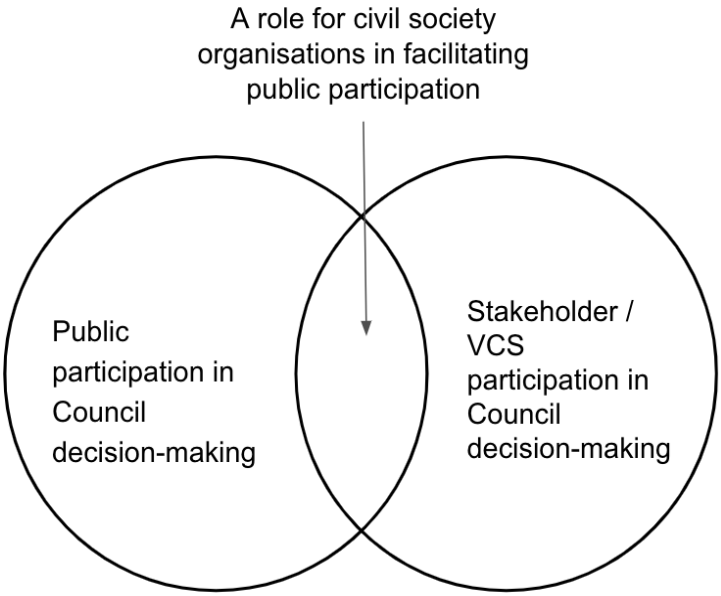


Figure 1: distinction between public and stakeholder engagement

However, the VAS report 'State of the Voluntary and Community Sector 2018' [9] shows a low confidence in the Council's relationship with the VCS. The majority of organisations feel the Council does not inform, consult or involve them appropriately on issues which are relevant to their organisations. Like members of the public, many organisations are dissatisfied with their ability to influence Council decisions and there is a sense that the Council is not listening or effectively engaging with them. This is not true for all organisations: some stakeholders note that a number of VCS organisations have a direct line to the Council and a close relationship with it, but that this isn't the position for the majority of VCS organisations.

Funding has been problematic for many in the VCS sector in recent years, which is likely to have a bearing on their ability to support public participation. Concerns relate to adequacy and sustainability of funds, equality and fairness of funding, and competitive bidding structures [6, 7, 8]. Only 23% of organisations are satisfied with the Council's grant funding / contract bidding arrangements [9]. Funding was also recognised as being particularly problematic for BAME VCS groups [7].

Stakeholders comment that tensions exist between some VCS organisations in Sheffield and that these stem from several sources, including them being placed in a situation where they are competing for resources to support their communities. Rather than "setting organisation against organisation", some want the Council to redesign funding mechanisms, so they encourage collaboration. One stakeholder recommends the Council completely rethinks its commissioning role and how it commissions services to meet communities' needs.

Stakeholders comment on the value of spaces that bring VCS organisations together to share information and collaboratively work together. They also see value in engagement which provides Council officers

and Councillors with an opportunity to better understand the issues facing the VCS and the communities they service and advocate for, and to share ideas together. One stakeholder expressed concern about silos developing between different parts of the Council and different VCS organisations.

Although there is an appreciation of the crucial role the VCS plays in being a bridge to Sheffield's diverse communities, there is concern that the Council does not always adequately fund VCS groups and networks to facilitate this engagement.

2.5 Traditional democratic systems

This section draws on a particular report, which raises criticisms of the electoral system, those empowered through it and of the scrutiny mechanisms currently in place. It should be noted that these views of representative democracy will not be held by all. Further, councillors are often actively engaged with their local communities, often below the radar, and outside the scope of public meetings. Finally, the scrutiny mechanisms described (last paragraph in this section) do not exhaust the totality of tools that SCC uses to review and scrutinise its services.

Report [3] highlights a number of challenges associated with traditional democratic systems. The report points out that in the May 2019 Sheffield local elections, less than 10 percent of the electorate voted for the ruling group and 70.5 percent of the electorate did not vote. SCC has no power to change the electoral system. However, it might find that demonstrating its ability to listen through participatory process and engaging Sheffielders in its decisions and agenda-setting has a positive impact on voter turnout.

The report [3] notes that councillors were criticised by the people they spoke with for a lack of responsiveness and for prioritising party political agendas over the interests of local communities. They explain that Sheffielders do not feel they have a meaningful representation or voice in council decision-making via their elected representatives. This feeling is echoed by some Sheffielders in [2], who complain that councillors are only visible at election time. They want councillors to listen to local residents more frequently and engage both face-to-face (e.g. surgeries, homes, work, colleges) and online. A few argue that councillors need to understand better what the majority thinks, rather than listening to the vocal minority. A few Sheffielders mention positive interactions and events with local politicians, and believe there should be greater awareness of the role of councillors and the work they do.

Report [3] also reflects that the primary mechanism currently to engage directly in scrutiny is to ask a 'public question', which they describe as an adversarial process rather than a collaborative one. They argue that "*representative democratic systems are limited, and need additional mechanisms and processes to enhance decision-making (and as part of checks and balances).*"

2.6 Communication channels

Given communications are often an important part of effective engagement, this section shares some Sheffielders' views [2] on SCC's communications channels.

- **Sheffielders have mixed feelings about the use of social media platforms for community engagement.** Some find Facebook helpful, whilst others have had negative experiences: "I used to be in a Facebook group for the area and it was good for staying up to date with goings on in the area, however I had to leave because people kept arguing and posting divisive things in the channel."

- **Concern for the digitally excluded.** Many Sheffielders worry that the digitally excluded will miss out on Council communications.
- **Displaying information in public spaces.** Some Sheffielders are frustrated that there are not enough physical places, such as notice boards, where you can go to find out about Council activities.
- **Promoting events.** Some are concerned that events are not advertised properly, with residents finding out about them at short notice.

3. Ideas for improvement

This section summarises the suggestions made across a range of sources [2, 3, 6, 8].

In addition, the Citizen Hubs report [10] contains detailed proposals for a new participation structure within the city, that aims to empower Sheffielders at every step of the engagement process. We cannot repeat the detail of this proposal in the space we have here and have not attempted to do so. The Citizen Hubs report is, however, worth reading for the principles and component parts that sit behind and within its proposals, whatever the Council's eventual view on the overarching proposal itself.

Purpose of engagement

- Have a clear purpose for engaging Sheffielders. Be honest about the rationale for engagement
- Be clear about the issues on which Sheffielders can expect to have influence, and the level of that influence
- Ensure that the level(s) of engagement used are appropriate for the purpose and that the promise to citizens is clear - and upheld

Who engages

- Ensure it isn't the "same old people / groups" taking part.
- Actively support Sheffield's diverse communities to engage, particularly those who are underrepresented, underserved or who are facing disadvantages.
- Make sure young residents are part of mainstream engagement activities.
- Don't just look at equality characteristics in isolation - people often have multiple identities
- Engage with the VCS prior to commencing engagement activities to better understand the context, what is needed and how to reach underrepresented groups.
- Don't allow a lack of knowledge to hinder people's participation.
- Acknowledge that not everyone will want to take part. They may be too busy or simply not interested.

- Use sortition to recruit a representative sample who can genuinely represent those people the Council serves so you hear informed non partisan views.[17]

How to engage Sheffielders

- Match the approach(es) to your audiences. Vary the engagement approach / model depending on the communities and audiences.
- Use a diversity of methods to reach as wide a range of people as possible.
- Make sure events are accessible and people can participate in multiple ways, with online engagement available for those who can't join face-to-face.
- Make engagement accessible to all. For example, digital exclusion is still a significant challenge and needs to be taken into account; offer alternative formats, such as BSL and easy read; ensure venues are trusted and accessible; make sure activities happen at different times and days, so people can take part around their work/life commitments.
- Move up the ladder of participation. Public participation shouldn't just be about extracting information. The Council needs to be more ambitious and should use co-creation methods and deliberative citizens' assemblies.
- Support more public engagement mechanisms which bring politicians and Sheffielders together regularly to advise the Council on city-wide strategic issues.

Engagement materials

- Know who your audience(s) is prior to developing engagement materials
- Easy read supporting documents should not be seen as an add on but an integral part of participatory processes.
- Engagement materials and surveys need to be written using clear and simple language. Use pictures (e.g. videos, images) as well as words.
- Consider what accessible material formats are required prior to engaging.
- Engagement materials need to be appropriate for the audiences; some stakeholders will require more detail, for example when consulting on the budget.

Integrating public engagement into decision-making

- Develop principles for engagement. Host a discussion about principles and values and develop a shared understanding with communities.

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[17] We have included this point as it was raised in the materials we reviewed. However it is important to note that engaging a representative sample of the population may not always be appropriate depending on the issue under consideration. Also, while sortition is the gold standard method for recruiting a representative sample of people and has clear advantages, other methods can be significantly cheaper particularly for very local work and should sometimes be considered.

- Develop a framework for participation that is creative and responsive to innovations, particularly to counter the impact of inequalities.
- Embed public and community engagement within all Council processes so that it is part of "business as usual." Directly involve Sheffielders in decision making at neighbourhood level up to city-wide level.
- Actively take into account the views of marginalised / underserved communities when designing mechanisms which support community decision making.
- Build on existing engagement infrastructure and learn from what has worked well (e.g. champions project) and what hasn't (e.g. trees). Host sharing sessions between members, officers and local community representatives.

Ensuring public participation has impact

- Public participation needs to take place before decisions have been made. The earlier in the decision-making process, the better. This means Council decision making needs to be more open and deliberative.
- Public participation needs to make a difference. There needs to be a demonstrable impact that is evident in Council decision-making.
- There needs to be an accountability mechanism, to ensure feedback is going to the right places and to track the impact it has had over time.
- Relatedly, there needs to be a clear and timely feedback loop after public participation. This should cover what the Council is taking forward, what it isn't taking forward and why. It is okay not to take on all the recommendations from engagement - as long as the Council lets people know and explains why.

Resources, capacity building and training for engagement

- Appoint a specific person who is responsible for engagement in the Council and ensures consistency across the Council.
- Public participation is a skill base - those who engage communities need to be skilled and it is helpful if they know local communities.
- Provide formalised support to (under resourced and marginalised) communities to take part and contribute to decisions.
- Consider thank you payments for participating in time intensive engagement processes, such as regular committees
- Invest in training around participatory models, for example second LAC staff into community organisations.
- Ensure there is capacity in the Council to process what Sheffielders are saying

Greater connectivity and collaboration

- Develop a culture where Sheffielders, public services and community organisations collaborate on local issues
- People want to see more deliberation and consensus-building, more collaboration between political parties, and with communities and stakeholders
- People want there to be better communications, with the Council being more open with Sheffielders, listening, talking and asking their views, providing feedback.

Other suggestions relating to the Council

- The Council is too business focused and needs to move into civic duty space
- Leadership need to learn how to listen
- Criticism should be viewed as a means to improve
- Councillors and officers need to abide by the Nolan principles
- Run events for Members to see if their views vary from the public

4. References

[1] Involve. Public participation.

[2] Sheffield City Council (2021). Local Area Committee Community Survey

[3] It's Our City! (October 2020) Commentary and evidence. From 'strong leader' to more democratic modern committee governance in Sheffield - community perspectives.

[4] Sheffield City Council (2020) Big City Conversation survey

[5] Sheffield City Partnership (2020) State of Sheffield 2020 Report

[6] Involve stakeholder interviews (2022)

[7] Sheffield Race Equality Commission (2021) Interim update.

[8] Involve (2022) roundtables draft report

[9] VAS (2018) Sheffield State of the Voluntary and Community Sector

[10] Opus Independents Ltd (2021) Citizen Hubs

Appendix 3: case studies of public participation in Sheffield

At the Involve workshop in January 2022, it was recommended that case studies of good practice in public participation in Sheffield are written up to inform future engagement work.

This section provides a short write up of nine case studies suggested by Council officers and stakeholders as projects which have strong elements to them. In addition to highlighting the strengths, we have also drawn out what worked less well and lessons that can be learnt.

The following case studies are included:

1. Access Liaison Group
2. Clean Air Zone
3. Community Champion Project
4. Darnall Library
5. Regather's transition to a community benefit society
6. Scrutiny Hate Crime Task Group
7. ShefFood and Sheffield's SFP Bronze Award
8. Supporting the VCFS to engage communities
9. Young People's Experiences of the Covid-19 Pandemic

All case studies use the same template and explore the following questions:

- About the project
- Is this an example of public participation in SCC decision-making?
- Why is this an example of good participation? What worked well? Strengths?
- Are there aspects that worked less well? What lessons can be learnt?
- Further detail
    - Who led this public participation exercise?
    - How were citizens engaged?
    - Who participated? How many organisations and individuals were reached?
    - What helped individuals or organisations to want to and/or be able to take part?
    - What was the plan for how the findings would feed into decision-making / how did it work in practice?
    - What impact did the project / citizens' views have? Are there things that have changed as a result?

These case studies are based on conversations with Council officers and VCS organisations who have been directly involved with the projects and could speak from first-hand knowledge. They are a summary of one person's perspective and will not necessarily be a complete picture of each project. They are

intended to be a short summary of what was involved and provide insights on what worked well and lessons learnt.

1. Access Liaison Group

Case study	Sheffield's Access Liaison Group
About the project	Action Liaison Group (ALG) is an independent group of disabled people supported by Sheffield City Council. The group enables SCC to fulfil its duty under the Equality Act 2010 by ensuring that consultation includes the views of disabled people; and that this is not left to chance through a general consultation which may fail to capture them. ALG offers the independent view of disabled people in order to improve the ability of disabled people to fully participate in the life of the City. Its primary areas of concern include, though are not limited to: planning policy and proposals, corporate policy and service delivery, operational issues around events, issues affecting the construction, maintenance, and management of the built environment.
Date of the project	The ALG has been established for a number of years.
Step on the 'Ladder of participation'	Educating / Informing / Consulting / Engaging / Co-designing / Co-producing
Is this an example of PP in SCC decision-making?	Yes.

Why is this an example of good participation? What worked well? Strengths?	A key strength of the ALG is that it operates independently, yet symbiotically with the Council. Here are highlights: ● It is a pan disability group - people with lived experience input their experience, views and constructively challenge plans ● It is independently chaired, which means that agenda is not controlled by the Council and key issues are followed up ● It is attended by three councillors from different political parties. They listen and can take issues further and advise where solutions require political action. This input is meant to be politically neutral. The need for these councillors to ensure their political grouping understands accessibility implications for big decisions will increase in the new system due to collective decision making. ● A Council access officer co-ordinates the Groups' business and arranges for people to attend from departments leading projects that require review. This works well with some Council departments; others are more reluctant to attend. The group members also have the ability to raise items via the Chair and currently small items to note can be raised through AOB. ● Every six months the CEO attends. This is an opportunity to share 2-3 important issues coming through for disabled people in the city and is a valuable escalation route. ● Minutes capture each member's views and the richness of conversations. This means that those responsible for projects can ask follow up questions if required.
Are there aspects that worked less well? What lessons can be learnt?	● Some projects are brought to the ALG at too late a stage for the Group to have optimal impact on the design at a cost efficient stage. ● On occasion, if the ALG makes a recommendation - but the Council or a contractor's decision is not to do something - feedback is not always given. People should always be told why something does not happen. ● Recruitment can be challenging, given there are 10 meetings a year and each meeting lasts 2-3 hours. One way to overcome this might be to offer a thank you payment. This might help younger people to take part, given meetings take place in business hours.
Further details	

Who leads this public participation exercise?	The ALG is led by the Chair and Vice Chair, who are re-elected by Group members through a confidential vote every 12 months. The Chair makes sure that the Group focuses on important issues, and more challenging projects and topics are not avoided.
How are citizens engaged?	There are 10 meetings a year and each meeting lasts 2-3 hours.
Who participates? How many organisations and individuals were reached?	The ALG consists of the following representatives: disabled people and organisational representatives of the Disabled Community (up to 8 people attend each meeting); at least one SCC officer; three councillors from the main political parties are appointed at SCC's annual general meeting; and an independent Chair and Vice Chair.
What helped individuals or organisations to want to and/or be able to take part?	Members can have a direct impact on the Council's plans for accessibility and the built environment in Sheffield.
What is the plan for how the findings feed into decision-making / how does it work in practice?	The Group is there to provide advice and the ability to explore problems and potential solutions. These perspectives feed into plans, although ultimately someone else is making the decision. On big projects, wherever possible and practical, ALG in collaboration with others pulls together one consultation response for the Council across other groups. Given that pan disability experience can mean difficult trade-offs for some schemes this can be challenging and time-consuming work often backed by the Disability lead organisation for the Sheffield Equality Partnership. This is often only possible thanks to funding but adds value which is not available elsewhere. The group isn't there to provide the ultimate defence. There may be others around the city that bring different perspectives in their responses to consultations that the Council must also consider.

What impact did the project / citizens' views have? Are there things that have changed as a result?	Often group input is invaluable for strategically important EIAs particularly for the built environment including street lighting. Chef-exec time has been vital in ensuring long standing deficiencies in provision of Social Services support for BSL users and the Deaf community have been dealt with, and that chronic access issues to the council in general for the Deaf community will (hopefully!) soon be improved. The ALG's input has had an impact on the design of new public spaces, particularly when projects have been led by inhouse teams. "It's an invaluable piece of citizen involvement that increases the quality of the environment for everyone. Part of having a more equal society is about having nothing to complain about if it [a built environment design / scheme] is done right and you can get on with living life as a disabled person." ALG Chair.
Additional information	Transport 4 All operates a comparable model to ALG for Transport accessibility and the groups co-operate together as appropriate. The key addition to participants includes the main public transport operators and SYPTE. The group meets quarterly and is a bit less 'technical' that tends to boost participation.

2. Clean Air Zone Consultation

CASE STUDY	Consultation on Sheffield's Clean Air Zone
About the project	In 2019, Sheffield City Council (SCC) proposed a Clean Air Zone (CAZ) as part of its commitment to improve Sheffield's air quality. The CAZ would charge older vehicles in specific classes of vehicle (buses, lorries, taxis and vans) that didn't meet a minimum emissions standard to drive in the city centre and inner ring road, but not private cars. SCC undertook two rounds of consultation to find out what people thought. The first focused on the proposed CAZ and the second on support available for those impacted to upgrade to a cleaner vehicle.
Date of the project / public involvement	The first consultation ran from 1st July to 26th August 2019. The second consultation closed on the 17th December 2021.
Step on the 'Ladder of participation'	~~Educating /~~ Informing ~~/~~ Consulting ~~/ Engaging / Co-designing / Co-producing~~
Is this an example of PP in SCC decision-making?	Yes
Why is this an example of good participation? What worked well? Strengths?	There was a high response rate to the first consultation, with five times more people responding to the survey than any consultation that the SCC has run in recent years. This was the result of a highly effective, targeted communications campaign which reached over 600,000 people. The high response rate also showed citizens consider clean air an important issue. The campaign made it as easy as possible for Sheffielders to notice the CAZ consultation and to respond to it. This involved using multiple communications channels, including digital, and making the respondent journey as frictionless as possible. All advertising funnelled respondents to a single website with a clear call to action, linked to a well written survey. In addition to the communications campaign and online survey, the Council held events and meetings for citizens, stakeholders, and affected groups, such as taxi drivers and people with disabilities.

Are there aspects that worked less well? What other lessons can be learnt?	There wasn't a clear internal process for disseminating the results of the consultation, and it took time for the Council to respond to the issues raised. Similarly, more could have been done to feed back the results externally. An officer suggested the Council introduce a "You said, we did" tracker so that the citizens know what actions have been taken as a result of a consultation exercise. Fewer citizens living in the more deprived north and east of Sheffield responded to the consultation than the west, even though there were more targeted comms in these areas. Citizens from ethnic minorities were also under-represented. Consultations are self-selecting and are not therefore expected to be representative of the views of a population; however, it's important to be aware when some groups of society are participating less and to find ways to improve representation of them. Another lesson is the importance of evidence-based research of all audiences prior to commencing a consultation, especially those that are likely to be directly affected.
Further details	
Who led this public participation exercise?	SCC led both consultations. Independent external organisations were commissioned to analyse the results and to organise some of the events.
How were citizens engaged?	See 'what worked well'
How many organisations & individuals took part?	The first consultation received around 12,000 responses. There were 9261 responses to the citizens questionnaire, 2306 to the taxi driver's questionnaire and 307 to the businesses / organisation's questionnaire.
Who participated?	Citizens took part from across Sheffield, as well as businesses and organisations, and taxi drivers who might be affected by the CAZ.
What helped individuals or organisations to want to and/or be able to take part?	Firstly, the respondent's journey, from finding out about the consultation to completing a survey, was designed to be as smooth as possible. Secondly, events for affected groups, such as taxi drivers, were held in locations and at times that would be most convenient for them. And officers were available to support engagement and to listen to concerns.

What was the plan for how the findings would feed into decision-making / how did it work in practice?	Ekosgen, an independent consultancy who analysed the data and produced the report, gave a presentation of the findings for the people involved in the project.
What impact did the project / citizens' views have? What changed as a result?	In the Council's initial proposals, only electric and hybrid taxis and private hire vehicles were exempt from charges. As a result of taxi drivers' concerns, the proposals were changed so that Euro 6 vehicles would also be exempt. Other exemptions, such as local schools and charities who operate not for profit transport as part of their service (i.e., operate under a section 19/22 permit), were also considered as a result of the consultation. Grants and loans to support businesses to upgrade to compliant vehicles were also altered following discussions with affected groups.

3. Community Champion Project

CASE STUDY	Sheffield's Community Champion project
About the project	The Community Champion Project funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) through Sheffield City Council aims to empower communities by equipping them with information to support them in making informed choices around their own health and wellbeing. Sheffield City Council contracted with SOAR to deliver the central coordination to ensure this project was run by communities, with the hope of building more trust and engagement. The project works with organisations across Sheffield that are in areas with lowest vaccine uptake. These organisations recruit volunteers - community champions - to disseminate correct information in a variety of ways and feedback the attitudes of communities. This in turn helps services to understand the needs of the community and adapt accordingly, with the hope of building more trust. Community champions are relatable and trusted community members from diverse ethnicities, aged 18+. They receive training to improve their knowledge on Covid and other health topics and receive health conversation training to promote motivational interviewing skills. Currently the project focuses on Covid-19 and vaccinations - although it is not limited to this, as champions support in a variety of issues raised in communities.
Date of the project	15th March 2021 – Present
Step on the 'Ladder of participation'	Educating / Informing / Consulting / Engaging ~~/ Co-designing / Co-producing~~
Is this an example of public participation in SCC decision-making?	Yes, we feed back the word on the ground to a project steering group, whose membership links into networks involved in decision making. The project is designed to support communities in accessing services and resources, whilst ensuring decision makers know what communities are asking for/need.

Why is this an example of good participation? What worked well? Strengths?	Examples of why the Community Champion project works well: ● There is a lot of mistrust towards the government in all ethnicities, but particularly those from BAMER communities. Working with people already embedded in the community such as organisations and volunteers allows for populations to share and receive information more freely as it is informal. ● This model has been effective in helping reach more people, empowering communities with information by working through relatable people that communities trust. ● Services are listening and working with the VCFS to meet the needs of communities. ● Building positive relationships across the city, collaboration, cohesion and building trust between communities and services.
Are there aspects that worked less well? What were the limitations?	Communities are gaining additional support through engagement and trust is being built. Community engagement needs to continue long term to become sustainable. We do not want to lose the hard work in building trust and cohesive working.
Details	
Who leads?	Collectively – by organisations involved in delivering the project.
How were/are citizens engaged?	Members of the public are engaged through conversations with community champions. Community champions are trusted members of communities. We provide training to improve their knowledge, and they go on to educate and engage members of the public both face-to-face and digitally. Conversations are non judgemental or pushy. In addition to sharing factual information, champions listen to the questions and concerns of the people they are engaging with.

How many organisations and individuals took part?	The following organisations have been involved to date: ● 9 VCF organisations - ACT, Firvale Community Hub, Longley 4G Community Centre, Sharrow Community Forum, Darnall Wellbeing, Flower Estate Family Action, SACMHA Health and Social Care, Burngreave Library and SOAR as central coordination. ● 157 Community champions recruited to date. ● Community champions have engaged with 17331 people to date, 14845 from BAMER Communities. ● Public Health reference group (Public health member, Local GP & SOAR) ● Steering Group (SCC, public health reference group and SOAR) ● The Council's Covid prevention hub – communications support
What helped individuals or organisations to want to and/or be able to take part?	● At an individual level, people are encouraged to engage because the people they are speaking with are trusted members of the community who have been trained to listen and use motivational interview techniques. ● The focus on empowering communities, and helping to reduce health equalities, has encouraged individuals and organisations to take part. The approach has also been one of listening, learning and adapting to continually improve. ● There has been a communications campaign to promote the project. All organisations/stakeholders within the project co designed the comms campaigns with feedback given by the community champions and communities. We shared this city wide to ensure all could access the campaign. SCC Public Health, SCC Comms team and NHS CCG Comms team supported in getting the messages right. And the branding was continued by SCC which showed consistency between community and Local authority comms #vaccinatesheffield

What was the plan for how the findings would feed into decision-making / how did it work in practice?	The project co-ordinator plays a central role in feeding back messages that are emerging from community conversations to relevant services. This involves: ● Community champions listening to peoples' questions and concerns ● Community champions engage with their organisations regularly and the project coordinator through a monthly learning circle, where emerging messages are shared. ● The coordinator takes key messages from the monthly learning cycle to the Public Health Reference Group (Sheffield Public Health and a GP) and the steering group (SCC, CCG Public Health Reference Group and Central coordinators). These messages in turn feed into decision-making.
What impact did the project / citizens' views have? Are there things that have changed as a result?	The project has had a number of positive impacts: ● It has helped many people in making informed choices around their own health and wellbeing ● It has built some trust towards services ● It has supported volunteers into further education and employment ● It has built better ways of working between services and VCF organisations ● It has allowed organisations and services to share best practices, what has and has not worked and any other learning

4. Developing Darnall Library

Case study	**Developing Darnall Library (2017/2018)**
About the project	The aim of the first phase of the Darnall Library project was to explore the proposition of Darnall's library as a community hub. The project was funded by the One Project Estate initiative which was exploring ways to maximise value from the Council's land and property. Darnall Library was selected because it is in an area of high need and it was felt the site could be expanded to better meet the needs of its diverse communities and other public estates in the area released for development. The change agency FutureGov was commissioned to deliver the first phase of the Darnall library project. From the outset, a collaborative approach was taken with the aim of involving and upskill staff, and engaging residents to together create solutions for Darnall library. The first phase developed a vision for Darnall and identified the following opportunities to take forward: ● Act on the shared Library ● Celebrate Darnall identity and communities ● Have a neutral branding ● Offer a safe environment
Date of the project	November 2017 - March 2018
Step on the 'Ladder of participation'	Educating / Informing / Consulting / Engaging / Co-designing / Co-producing
Is this an example of public participation in SCC decision-making?	The intention was that the project would inform the plans for Darnall's library and prototype new services from the library. However, the vision developed was not taken forward. See 'what worked less well'.

Why is this an example of good participation? What worked well? Strengths?	The major strength of this project was the approach taken to understand the concerns and aspirations of local people for Darnall's library. Rather than trying to consult as many local people as possible, a smaller number of in-depth 1:1 and group interviews were held with residents, families and social groups who were broadly reflective of Darnall's diverse communities (around 25 people). The interviews, which were recorded verbatim, resulted in a rich understanding of people's concerns and aspirations in their own words. From this in-depth qualitative engagement, the project working group developed a set of 'insights' or "Wow, I didn't know that's what people thought!" moments to create a unique vision for Darnall library to connect it more with the local community.
Are there aspects that worked less well? What lessons can be learnt?	Sadly, apart from a few minor changes at the library, the project didn't progress beyond phase one and the vision for Darnall library that emerged from the engagement activity has not (yet) been realised. One of the primary reasons it did not progress is the budget that would have been required for phase two (approx. £80k), which was being requested at a time when the Council was focused on reducing costs and appeared to have other priorities. It is possible that there were other factors which contributed to why the project halted, however no formal reflection took place after phase one to learn from the successes and the challenges.
Further details	
Who led this public participation exercise?	The project was led by the Council's Library and Property Services team. The change agency FutureGov was commissioned to design and deliver the engagement work. A working group, which included the Library and Locality team, FutureGov, Business Change and Information Systems (BCIS), and Property Services, were actively involved in the delivery. The project was coordinated by a student at Sheffield Hallam University, as part of their final year dissertation.

How were citizens engaged?	See ‘what worked well’ Another important aim was to involve managers and staff in the project, given most library staff lived outside the area and creating a community hub would result in them being more engaged with local communities. Skills training was therefore provided by FutureGov so that staff were involved in delivering the research and as much engagement was done in the library building as possible.
Who participated? How many organisations and individuals were reached?	The approach reached a wide spectrum of people who were reflective of Darnall’s diverse population. As it was in-depth qualitative research, a vast number of people did not need to take part. Instead, verbatim data from depth interviews provided rich insights and “aha” moments. Those the team spoke with included: adult residents; young people (group session in a gym); community organisers and leaders; service colleagues across locality, cohesion and libraries; and councillors and council colleagues.
What helped individuals or organisations to want to and/or be able to take part?	A number of steps were taken to enable participation: ● As a way to thank people for their time and contributions, people were rewarded with vouchers. Some people accepted this thank you voucher, but not everyone took it up. ● Local residents were interviewed in spaces, and with other people, they were comfortable in - whether that was in their home or the library, or one their own or with members of their family. ● Informed consent was obtained prior to conducting interviews, so that participants understand what was involved and how the data would be used.
What was the plan for how the findings would feed into decision-making / how did it work in practice?	The plan was to integrate the library more in its community. It had become isolated physically with changes to the local supermarket orientation. The sponsor for the project was part of a strategic board for communities and we reported through that means. But also we held a number of ‘stand up’ meetings with printouts of the verbatim transcripts, highlighted to illustrate the ‘Aha’ moments, and pictures (if permitted) of the contributors. These were attended by the sponsor and cabinet member and all members of the team encouraged to talk about the findings and vision.

What impact did the project / citizens' views have? Are there things that have changed as a result?	Although a number of small changes were implemented after phase one, the ambition that emerged for Darnall library from in-depth conversations has not yet been realised. However, Sheffield Libraries has ambitions for expanding the community space in Darnall Library and using the vision and findings to recruit community library champions that could bring their communities into the space to celebrate their cultures, and thus engage with the library as a community resource, open and welcoming to all.

5. Regather's transition to a community benefit society

Case study	Regather's transition to a community benefit society
About the project	Regather is a co-operative of local people working to improve food and building community in Sheffield. It runs an organic farm, veg box scheme and other community projects. In 2018, it transitioned from a membership co-operative to a community benefit society. After consultation with the membership over an 18-month period, it is introducing two membership categories - worker owners and community owners, who will have a 50/50 split of voting rights. This means that workers and community owners will work together to direct and govern the organisation, on an equal footing. Although this is not an example of public participation in decision-making, it provides a cutting-edge example of democratic participation in a community business.
Date of the project	2020 - 2022 (transition to two membership categories)
Step on the 'Ladder of participation'	~~Educating / Informing / Consulting / Engaging /~~ Co-designing / Co-producing • Once the new structure has been embedded, it will be 50/50 voting and can be classified as 'co-producing'.
Is this an example of public participation in SCC decision-making?	No. Although lessons are not directly transferable to public participation in Council decision-making, this case study is an innovative example of how members of a community can engage in the direction and governance of a local organisation on a level playing field with other key stakeholders.
Why is this an example of good participation? What worked well? Strengths?	There is a tendency for society to operate in a way that is skewed towards wealth and power. The aim of the Regather cooperative is to create a more equitable and fair power dynamic, through the organisation's governance structure. This project is a significant step away from traditional consultation and engagement, to a model where communities are at the heart of an organisation's governance, on an equal footing with workers. Regather will be able issue share equity in the form of community shares. Rather than paying a dividend, they will offer a rate of interest. This will provide a financial mechanism for locking money into the local economy.

What lessons can be learnt?	Given it is a cutting-edge structure, it is inevitable there will be risks and challenges that will need to be worked through.

6. Scrutiny Hate Crime Task Group

CASE STUDY	SCRUTINY HATE CRIME TASK GROUP
Date of the project / public involvement	October 2016 to January 2017
About the project	The Safer & Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee undertook an in-depth piece of work on the reporting of hate crime. It was delivered by a cross-party Hate Crime Task Group. The purpose was: "To understand the different ways hate crime can be reported in the city to identify things that were working well and any areas for improvement." Data was gathered in a number of ways, including engagement with local organisations, groups and individuals. It was a timely piece of work for two reasons. Firstly, the Task Group became aware that the Equality Hub Network (EHN) had also set up a "cross hub working group" to do some work around hate crime, with a focus on raising awareness and communication. This provided an opportunity for the two groups to collaborate, with each focusing on a different aspect of hate crime. Secondly, the work coincided with the publication of the Government's Hate Crime Action Plan.
Step on the 'Ladder of participation'	~~Educating / Informing~~ / Consulting / Engaging / ~~Co-designing / Co-producing~~
Is this an example of public participation in SCC decision-making?	Yes – it involved stakeholder and citizen engagement and was a task group of an SCC Committee.

Why is this an example of good participation? What worked well? Strengths?	Firstly, the partnership with the EHN brought synergies. It meant the Task Group engaged with more diverse perspectives on hate crime than if they had been working alone. It also helped to raise the profile of EHN and the work they are doing, and gave them a better chance of real influence, as the scrutiny report went to cabinet with recommendations. The EHN also submitted an application for Government funding building on the work. Secondly, the team's expertise aligned with the project. The policy officer supporting the Task Group had a background interest in engagement and equalities work and the elected member from the Council's scrutiny committee was very active in EHN and was chairing their hate crime working group. Thirdly, the findings were presented internally and to partners (e.g. Safer and Sustainable Communities Partnership Board / Strategic Equality & Inclusion Board) which meant a greater focus on inclusion when feeding back, including an easy read version produced by Disability Sheffield.
Are there aspects that worked less well? What lessons can be learnt?	A challenge was the Council's limited scrutiny capacity, made up of a very small team of policy officers (2.5 full-time equivalent) supporting five committees. This had implications for the scope of the work but also in terms of following up the recommendations. Although progress was made in implementing the recommendations, a limitation in the system is that scrutiny committees are only in place for one year. This can result in a lack of continuity in the membership and changing priorities, making it harder to track progress over the longer term.
Further details	
Who led this public participation exercise?	It was led by the Safer & Stronger Committee's task group on hate crime.
How were citizens engaged?	A range of approaches were used to gather data, including desk top research, evidence gathering sessions, events and workshops. This included meetings with stakeholders, joint events with EHN, meeting young advisors from Sheffield Futures, a workshop with Sheffield Voices, and an online survey sent to third party reporting centres.
Who participated? How many organisations and individuals were reached?	The Task Group engaged with a number of organisations and individuals, including citizens with personal experience of hate crime. It was a limited project and did not attempt to engage with the wider public, but instead worked with the EHN who are connected to communities and could direct the team to groups where underreporting was known to be an issue.

What helped individuals or organisations to want to and/or be able to take part?	Different approaches and techniques were used depending on the individuals and groups being consulted. This ranged from confidential one-to-one interviews to visiting groups in their own spaces.
What was the plan for how the findings would feed into decision-making / how did it work in practice?	In February 2017 the Hate Crime Task Group Report presented the report to the Safer & Stronger Committee for their approval. It was also noted at Cabinet. In July 2017, the Safer & Stronger Committee were given an update on progress made in implementing the recommendations.
What impact did the project / citizens' views have? Are there things that have changed as a result?	The July 2017 progress report highlighted a number of steps that were taken to address the Task Group's recommendations. For example, an independent hate crime reporting line was established, additional assistance for third party reporting centres was looked into, and the Committee approached the police crime commissioner to request that some changes be made to the South Yorkshire Police recording systems, for example it was requested that the category of disability be expanded.

7. ShefFood and Sheffield's SFP Bronze Award

Case study	ShefFood and Sheffield's Sustainable Food Places (SFP) Bronze Award
About the project	ShefFood is a cross-sector multi-stakeholder food partnership of local public agencies, businesses, academics and community organisations committed to working together to create a more sustainable and resilient food system for the Sheffield region. Its purpose is to connect, communicate, co-ordinate and celebrate partnership activity in Sheffield. In 2021, ShefFood led Sheffield's successful bid for a Sustainable Food Places (SFP) Bronze award. Although it is not an example of public participation in Council decision-making, ShefFood shows what can be achieved through effective partnership working and how it engaged with the Sheffielders as part of its successful SFP Bronze Award.
Date of the project	It was set up in 2009 by a wide range of food system stakeholders to take responsibility for the delivery of Sheffield's Food Plan and the Sheffield Food Festival.
Step on the 'Ladder of participation'	~~Educating / Informing /~~ Consulting ~~/ Engaging~~ / Co-designing / Co-producing • The ShefFood partnership is an example of organisations working together to 'co-design' and 'co-produce' its work programme • Engaging local people and organisations in the SFP Bronze award bid is an example of 'consulting'.
Is this an example of public participation in SCC decision-making?	No. However, Sheffield's Food Strategy, which is developed by ShefFood partners, is an example of organisations collaborating in the development and implementation of a regional strategy, which the Council has a leading role in. The SFP Bronze award included public engagement to inform the bid.

Why is this an example of good participation? What worked well? Strengths?	Although ShefFood is not specifically focused on public participation, it shows what can be achieved through an effective multi-sector partnership. Its strengths include: ● A vision that partners are passionate about - a more sustainable food system for Sheffield ● Diversity of organisations, with responsibility for different aspects of Sheffield's Food Plan, working together collaboratively over many years ● Not seeing themselves as one partnership, but as a network of partnerships ● An organisation is accountable for its work (Regather) and employs a team of coordinators on behalf of the partnership Strengths of public participation in the SFP Bronze bid include: ● Number of individuals and local organisations that shared their stories (around 50 submissions) ● The success of the bid was in large part due to Sheffielders sharing real life examples of food partnership activity that they wanted to see recognised and celebrated in the bronze bid.
What lessons can be learnt?	Taking steps to ensure SCC involvement remained focused on discharging statutory responsibilities, and effectively working to support and enable other cross-sector partners outside the Council to work in partnership with the Council and to address food system challenges beyond the statutory responsibilities or resource capabilities of SCC.
Aim going forward	A key aim going forward is to develop the governance of ShefFood in a way which embeds SCC more effectively as a key stakeholder and local authority partner, which in turn, given the ability of ShefFood to engage the public, and vice versa, will significantly increase the quantity and quality of opportunities for public participation, via ShefFood, in Sheffield City Council's decision-making relating to the food system. This is just one example of the future potential that ShefFood can offer, as an independent food partnership for Sheffield, to help improve public participation in Sheffield City Council's decision-making.
Further details	This section focuses on public participation in the SFP bronze bid.
Who led this public participation exercise?	Public participation in the SFP Bronze Award bid was led by Regather.

How were citizens engaged?	As part of the Bronze Award campaign, ShefFood engaged with the public in various ways. This included: ● Participating in food related events that provided an audience who would be interested in the bid ● Sheffield Sustainable Food Survey 2021. Providing a simple mechanism that enabled Sheffielders to provide information about food partnership activity
Who participated?	Around 50 local people / organisations provided information about food partnership activity that they wanted to see recognised e.g. community allotments, schools, social enterprises, community projects.
What helped people to take part?	ShefFood was able to tap into its regular communications activities to raise awareness of the SFP Bronze Award bid.
How did the findings feed into decision-making?	The survey findings fed into the SFP Bronze Award application, bringing colour to the application with real life examples.
What impact did the citizens' views have?	The engagement of Sheffielders via the survey was central to Sheffield being awarded an SFP Bronze award.

8. Supporting the VCFS to engage communities

CASE STUDY	Supporting VCS organisations to engage communities in the development of Local Area Committees' Local Community Plans.
About the project	Following the launch of Local Area Committees (LAC), Sheffield City Council wanted to engage local people to help shape their approach to LACs and to inform the development of each of the seven LAC's Local Community Plan. Knowing that voluntary, community and faith organisations have strong connections with local communities, the Council asked the sector for their support in having conversations with their communities. They invited groups to bid for funding between £250 - £1,0000 to support this work. Over 40 organisations took part and hosted conversations. This fund for local organisations to engage communities was one of a number of pieces of work to inform the LCA Local Community Plans. Other public engagement activities included a city-wide survey, public meetings, drops-ins and work led by Sheffield Equality Partnership.
Date of the project / public involvement	The fund was launched on 2nd September 2021, engagement work took place in October, and groups submitted their findings in late November.
Step on the 'Ladder of participation'	Educating / informing / Consulting / Engaging / Co-designing / Co-production
Is this an example of PP in SCC decision-making	Yes - the Council worked with local organisations to hear the views of local people which informed the development of Local Community Plans.
Why is this an example of good participation? What worked well?	Firstly, providing financial support to local organisations to engage with local people was a way for SCC to reach diverse audiences and resulted in a much higher representation of citizens from ethnic minorities. Secondly, the Council wanted local organisations to focus on having quality conversations with local people. They were not prescriptive about how many people they should engage or the approach they should take. Organisations had the flexibility to host conversations in a way that would work best for their communities, which resulted in a diversity of approaches and organisations being involved, ranging from creative arts-based engagement to a simple conversation over a cup of tea. Thirdly, the Council provided organisations with a clear and simple template, with questions that would be easy for citizens to understand and answer.

Are there aspects that worked less well? What lessons can be learnt?	Due to time constraints, local organisations only had one month to host conversations. More prep time would have meant more pre-engagement too so we could have had more time to reach out to smaller groups / faith orgs etc. – we did some of this but more time and we could have done even more.
Further details	
Who led this public participation exercise?	Sheffield City Council led the project, working with local organisations.
How were citizens engaged?	A call was sent out to voluntary, community and faith sector organisations inviting them to support this community engagement work. A briefing document explained what was expected, for example the Council's desire to hear from people who are less likely to have their voices heard. The data was analysed by Council officers and the findings circulated to LACs.
How many organisations & individuals took part?	Over 40 local organisations were funded to engage with citizens. Around 4,000 completed paper based surveys were received.
Who participated?	A wider range of organisations got involved such as sports clubs, faith-based groups, youth clubs and residents' associations. They in turn reached out to the diverse communities they come into contact with.
What helped people to take part?	See 'what worked well'
What was the plan for how the findings would feed into decision-making?	The findings were circulated to each Local Action Committees so they could inform each LAC's priorities which will be set out in Local Community Plans.
What impact did the project / citizens' views have? Are there things that have changed as a result?	The feedback has influenced the development and priorities of the 7 community plans, one per LAC. All plans have now been signed off (happened around March 2022) the LAC's will now start to work on delivering projects working together with communities and VCFS.

9. Young People's Experiences of the Covid-19 Pandemic

CASE STUDY	Young People's Experiences of the Covid-19 Pandemic
About the project	A survey for secondary age students about living and studying during Covid-19 and Lockdown in 2020
Date of the project / public involvement	March – May 2021
Step on the 'Ladder of participation'	Consulting / Engaging
Is this an example of public participation in SCC decision-making?	No
Why is this an example of good participation? What worked well? Strengths?	• 299 responses from young people citywide, despite minimal publicity • Open and honest replies • Provided a number of key insights into young lives in Sheffield
Are there aspects that worked less well? What other lessons can be learnt?	
Details	
Who led this public participation exercise?	A collaboration between SCC's Consultation & Engagement Team, Communications Service and Public Health Team
How were/are citizens engaged?	Initially, we asked colleagues who worked with or who know / were related to secondary age young people to ask them to complete the survey. Our Comms Service then promoted it on their social media channels, which increased our uptake significantly.
How many organisations and individuals took part?	299 secondary age students took part.

What helped individuals or organisations to want to and/or be able to take part?	Good communication, making clear that we wanted open, honest and anonymous responses and that there would be 'no judgement' on our part and the accessibility (i.e. online, mobile-friendly) of the survey itself.
What was the plan for how the findings would feed into decision-making / how did it work in practice?	Initially, we wanted to gain an insight into young people's experiences but when we circulated the findings internally, we received a great deal of interest from colleagues who said the responses could feed into their work (see below).
What impact did the project / citizens' views have? Are there things that have changed as a result?	• Presented to a group named Covid Confidence, chaired by Darnall Wellbeing, made up of local organisations, Council, university and NHS representatives and focusing on tackling Covid in communities • Presented to Sheffield's Vulnerable Young People's Group • Circulated to schools and settings • *"I think it's essential reading for us all and should inform our future development and offers as much as possible too"* – Katie Hamshaw, Senior Project Officer, Sheffield Children's University • *"I'm quoting bits of it for the Health and Wellbeing Board. I'm using it in some of our key messages for attendance"* – Kate Dymond, Programme & Project Coordinator, Education & Skills • *"It will help with the children's Mental Health Commissioning Plan"* – Carol Fordham, Commissioning Manager, Education & Skills • *"Great report"* – Greg Fell, Director of Public Health • #CovidYouthSurvey – Sheffield City Council tweeted headlines from the report, and a link, under this hashtag
References	www.sheffield.gov.uk/covidyouthsurvey

10. Case studies from State of Sheffield 2020 Report

This is a list of community projects, taken from the State of Sheffield report [5], which shine a light on Sheffield's community spirit and the immense efforts to support Sheffielders in most need during the pandemic.

They have not been included as case studies in section 1 of Appendix 3, as they are not examples of public participation. However, they are likely to provide interesting insights and ideas which could inform future engagement work, for example strategies for communicating with people. They also highlight the important role the VCS can play in reaching communities that most need the Council's help.

Community projects featured in the State of Sheffield report are:

- **Sheffield BAMER Covid 19 Action Group.** A group of organisations with experience and knowledge of Sheffield's diverse communities came together to offer appropriate support and ensure needs were met.
- **Darnell Dementia.** Has found new ways to keep people who have dementia and their carers connected, for example through personalised video messages and carefully facilitated group sessions on Zoom for carers.
- **Covid-19 support line.** The Council established a dedicated Covid-19 phone line for Sheffielders to get the support they need, along with a dedicated Covid-19 website with regular email alerts. The telephone line has handled over 10,000 calls to access food parcels, shopping, medication or advice and guidance.
- **Locality Community Response Teams (LCRTs).** The Council set up seven LCRTs with involvement from the Voluntary, Community and Faith (VCF) sector, who coordinate the local response between agencies and help ensure that people are kept safe, well and supported during the Covid-19 pandemic

Appendix 4: Roundtables report - public participation in Sheffield City Council decision-making (March 2022)

Stakeholder roundtables - 3 December 2021 **1**
Introduction 2
Key strategic considerations 3
Key considerations when planning the public engagement 4
Feedback on the proposed content for public engagement 7
Feedback on the methods for public engagement 12
Method - Community Conversations 13
Method - Citizen researchers 14
Method - Dialogue workshops 15
Comments on other methods and preferences 15
Appendix 16
Content plan **16**

1. Introduction

On 3rd December 2021, Sheffield City Council and the participation charity Involve hosted two half-day roundtables with local stakeholders and community representatives to explore the potential content and design of a piece of public engagement work.

As part of its Transition to Committee Programme, Sheffield City Council commissioned Involve to help to answer the following question: "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."

The initial plan was for Involve to focus in the following three areas:

- Looking outwards - developing and delivering a piece of engagement work to get input on how public engagement with the new structures should work
- Looking inwards - working with members and officers to ensure that there is a strong alignment of engagement and the new decision-making model
- Training and capacity building - providing training and guidance to ensure the Council can deliver on the public engagement plans that emerge from the other strands

The workshops were the first step in the 'looking outwards' strand of the work. The aim was to gather thoughts on the potential content and methodologies for the piece of public engagement work. A total of xxx local stakeholders and community representatives participated in the roundtables. In this report, we refer to those who attended as 'stakeholders'.

The two roundtables followed the same agenda, as follows:

- Introductions to those attending, the purpose of the roundtable and Involve's wider work with SCC;
- Short presentations on firstly a mock content plan and then the possible methodologies - community conversations, citizen researchers and dialogue workshops - for the engagement, each followed by small group discussions and feedback.

Stakeholders shared additional comments on public participation in Sheffield as the roundtables progressed.

This report provides a summary of stakeholders' feedback, comments and suggestions. It is drawn from the following inputs:

- Written feedback provided by self-facilitating groups and individuals during the roundtables using templates provided;
- Conversations between Involve and stakeholders during the workshop.

The report is split into four sections:

1. Key strategic considerations;
2. Key considerations when planning public engagement;
3. Feedback on the mock content plan for public engagement;
4. Feedback on the proposed methodologies.

1. Key strategic considerations

During the course of the roundtables stakeholders made a range of comments and observations about public participation in Sheffield. Many of the suggestions they made were strategic in nature, focusing on how SCC should take forward public participation. They also commented on what the next steps for the piece of work being undertaken by Involve should be. Their comments and suggestions are summarised below.

The brief from SCC to Involve was to run a piece of public engagement that:

- Provided input to SCC around how public engagement with its new structures should work;
- Built relationships and ways of working that could contribute to SCC"s public engagement going forward.

Stakeholders at the roundtables challenged whether this was the right way forward. Some stakeholders felt that SCC and others had already asked Sheffielders about the strengths and weaknesses of its approach to public engagement. They suggested SCC and Involve start by looking at the results of this work, rather than by running another piece of engagement. Stakeholders were also keen to see longer term thinking about how participation in Sheffield should work.

Key strategic themes raised by stakeholders include:

- **Build a long term vision for public participation**. On the suggestion that the proposed piece of engagement would be the start of something longer term (e.g. by developing relationships useful for future participation work), stakeholders suggest that the council needs to know what its longer term vision of participation is for this to work.
- **Build on existing infrastructure and good practice in the city**. Stakeholders want the Council to build on existing engagement work and good practice in the city. The health champions work was mentioned as an example of good practice. Some stakeholders also suggest looking at other cities for inspiration.
- **Make public participation a mainstream activity**, part of the Sheffield City Council's business as usual. Stakeholders want engagement processes to be embedded within all council processes so that people are involved at all levels and can see the benefits of their engagement.
- **Help resource work around voice, influence and community building**. Some stakeholders argue for a move away from 'consultation' and extractive one-off processes to more ambitious models, which help resource communities. They suggest that these models are valuable in their own right and that building engagement in communities should be an end in itself. Stakeholders talk about investing in voice, influence, community building and co-production, and suggest building long-term dialogues.
- **Collaborate with the Voluntary, Community, Faith Sector (VCFS)**. Stakeholders see the VCFS playing an important role in reaching local communities, particularly less heard groups. However, they will need resources to do this work. Stakeholders also mention vulnerability in VCFS, the need to empower the sector to participate in voice and influence, and the need to think carefully about the distribution of funds.
- **Invest in training, mentoring and capacity building**. Stakeholders see investing in people, such as council officers, as a component of improving public participation in Sheffield. Suggestions include seconding LAC staff into community organisations, training around participatory models and shadowing opportunities for staff.
- **Build knowledge in communities**. Stakeholders worry that communities lack knowledge about the council and how to get involved. They argue that knowledge is power and that communities need to understand their city. Suggestions include an Easy Read guide covering what SCC is, what it does for you and how to get involved.
- **Reach the diversity of communities**. Stakeholders comment on the importance of listening to less heard people and groups. They explain that historically the council has not done consultation well. They describe it as reaching "middle class, educated", Sheffielders, with only those used to being proactive willing to participate. They suggest the silent majority has "given up".
- **Leaders should engage with communities**. Some stakeholders feel that the first step is for leaders to have open conversations with communities, in trusted community venues, ready to be open and transparent, and prepared to be challenged. They believe that people are more likely to engage when they can speak directly to council leaders.

Stakeholders also raise a number of issues that do not relate directly to public participation in decision-making, but could affect the public's willingness to engage.

These include:

- **Trust in SCC** - Stakeholders feel there is a mistrust in SCC. Trust was also raised indirectly, for example it was suggested that councillors and officers need to abide by the Nolan Principles.
- **Wider culture of SCC** - Stakeholders also raise concern about the wider culture of SCC. Some feel that SCC is too business focussed and run by 'business' officers, saying SCC needs to move back into the "civic duty space", and to put civic and public back into service delivery. Others noted that SCC needs to view criticism as a means to improve, rather than being defensive.
- **Public experiences contacting SCC** - Stakeholders talk of poor public experiences when engaging with SCC for something they need (for example, through SCC's website).

2. Key considerations when planning the public engagement

In addition to providing feedback on the proposed content and methodologies (see sections below), stakeholders talked more broadly about what needs to be considered when planning the proposed piece of public engagement. In addition to being relevant for this piece of work, it could also provide a checklist for when SCC is planning other pieces of public engagement.

2.1 What is the purpose?

Stakeholders query what the purpose of the engagement, and the underlying reason for members of the public wanting to get involved, will be. They recommend getting advice on what the purpose should be and exploring the context before engaging with the public.

They make a number of suggestions regarding the scope and content of the proposed engagement:

- **Be honest and realistic**. Stakeholders note that any public engagement needs to take place within the parameters of what is and isn't possible for SCC, and what is and isn't open to change.
- **Explain how to engage with the new structure**. Some stakeholders suggested that a way to stop the engagement being purely extractive was to take time to explain the new structure and how to navigate it, with the aim of empowering people to engage.
- **Talk about things that matter.** Some stakeholders think the engagement should focus on the things that matter to people (for example, health, housing etc), rather than the more abstract question of how to engage them. They feel this would work better and would be easier for people to engage with. Others suggest asking people about their experiences, what they feel about the services they receive, and what they see as the issues and barriers they face.

Some stakeholders are concerned that trust has broken down and talk of the need to build trust before starting the conversation. Stakeholders suggest various ways to rebuild trust including:

- **Develop shared principles and values**. Others feel there is a need for a discussion about principles and values, linking to concerns about SCC's wider culture. They suggest that - SCC needs to build a shared understanding of this with communities.
- **Build the agenda with communities.** Some stakeholders suggest building a shared agenda with communities about the issues it should be addressing.

2.2 Who will participate?

Stakeholders make a number of comments about who will be involved in the proposed public engagement, these include:

- You need to understand the demographic and engage with a wide section of communities, not just the same old groups / people. The loudest voices don't reflect the views of the majority - you will need to go to people, to hear different voices.
- Be aware that people cross over communities. For example, a person may identify with the D/deaf community, the LGBT+ community, mental health and BAMER.
- Think about promotion and consider who to contact to reach out to communities - people are more likely to participate if it is linked to a local organisation.
- Be careful not to exclude people because they have no knowledge / interest in the subject in advance.

As outlined under 'key strategic considerations', stakeholders see a role for the VCFS in connecting with local communities. They recommend working with those who have existing relationships and exploring how they can support the engagement. For example, local community groups could go and speak to people who don't have time to engage.

2.3 How will councillors be involved?

Stakeholders make a number of points about councillors. They query how members will be involved and point out that members represent communities. They recommend working through member roles / expectations and developing a collaborative approach. One stakeholder suggests running a separate event with members to see how their views vary from the public.

2.4 What pre-information will be provided?

Stakeholders reflect that many people are not familiar with how SCC works. They worry that some people may face information overload with the current plan, and recommend pre-information as one way to overcome this. They suggest this is in Easy Read.

2.5 How will you ensure the engagement is accessible?

Stakeholders highlight the importance of making engagement accessible. Suggestions include:

- Thinking about inclusivity for people with disabilities or people who have communication issues e.g. word banks / picture .

- Being mindful of other barriers to engaging, for example some people with dyslexia find it difficult to read words on white paper.
- Holding meetings in trusted and accessible community venues.
- Varying the timings of engagements to make sessions accessible to a wider range of people.

2.6 What methods will be used?

As mentioned above, stakeholders argue for a move away from 'consultation' and extractive one-off processes to more ambitious models that empower communities and are valuable in their own right. They also recommend that SCC has access to a tool box of methods or uses a mixed method approach, given that different methods will suit different audiences. Some stakeholders comment on the importance of considering digital exclusion if engagement is planned online.

Further views on specific methodologies are summarised under "Feedback on the methods for engagement."

2.7 How will you ensure the engagement has impact and feedback is provided?

Stakeholders emphasise the importance of public engagement exercises having impact and of providing feedback on what has happened as a result of peoples' input.

Some worry the proposed engagement "could open up a can of worms" and query how views will be fed into appropriate channels to create change for individuals. They also feel there needs to be capacity to process and act on what people say. They reflect that people need to know it is a genuine process and they will be listened to, and query how this will be achieved.

Stakeholders discuss the importance of providing feedback on how the engagement findings have been used, commenting: "you need to close the loop." You need to make sure the time and effort people have put into engaging is beneficial - there needs to be accountability.

2.8 Other things to consider when planning the engagement

Stakeholders highlight a number of other areas that need considering at the planning stage. These include: food (covid permitting), budget (is there justification about the cost and budget), how to get people there, who will facilitate, will the council / councillors be present.

3. Feedback on the proposed content for public engagement

Involve presented a mock content plan for the proposed public engagement sessions to spark discussion.

The content plan was made up of six sessions:

1. Welcome people
2. Warm-up: start people talking about the subject matter
3. Understand how aware people are of current ways to feed in to decision-making.
4. Get people's reactions to ideas for new ways the council could seek their input
5. Understand people's wishes and priorities around transparency of decision-making
6. Thank you, administration, what happens next

Attendees discussed the draft content plan in small groups and provided feedback in plenary. See Appendix for the Content Plan which was provided as a handout for stakeholders to review in their small group discussions.

This section summarises stakeholders' feedback on the proposed content plan, and looks at each section in numerical order.

3.1 Session 1 - Welcome people

Session description

Purpose: The purpose of this session is to welcome people and to ensure people are aware of key information about the event.

Introduction including, for example: the purpose of the event, who commissioned it, what the council is, and what the event does/doesn't cover in terms of scope; what will happen to what they say; input is anonymous (or pseudonymous, as accurate); conversation guidelines and housekeeping.

Feedback on this session

Stakeholders feel that this session may be too long, too heavy and too formal. People might be anxious (feeling everyone else in the room is knowledgeable but them) and unconfident. People might disconnect at this point. A challenge will be accommodating different paces.

Stakeholders made a number of suggestions regarding preparing for the event; these have been included under "Key considerations when planning the engagement."

3.2 Session 2 - Warm-up: start people talking about the subject matter

Session description

Warm-up

- First three words that come in to your head when you think about the council
- [And possibly: three words that would describe the ideal council]
- Notes: We are aiming for a short, easy way that starts where people are at.

Feedback on this session

Some stakeholders think 'three words about the council' would be a good icebreaker to get everyones' opinions and a good 'release value'. They also liked the second question - 'three words to describe the ideal council' - but suggested rewording it to what people expect rather than asking them to describe their ideal.

In contrast, other stakeholders think the exercise is not tailored, too simplistic, and two-dimensional. They feel that there needs to be more focus to make better use of people's time. They worry people will wonder: "what makes this exercise worth my time when I am also being asked about council activities constantly?"

Some are concerned this exercise presupposes everyone knows what the council does, for example, the roles of councillors and officers. They think this is a big assumption.

Some think careful facilitation would be required, otherwise individuals would focus on their own negative experiences. The following suggestion is made: have a big sheet of paper - encourage people to put their personal gripes on it in the break - SCC to guarantee to read it.

One stakeholder offered the following three words: irrelevant, out of touch, paternalistic.

Stakeholders suggested the following alternative questions for session 2 and 3:

- How do you feel about the council?
- What is your experience of engaging?
- Where is it not working for you?
- What barriers have stopped you engaging in the past?

3.3 Session 3 - Understand how aware people are of current ways to feed in to decision-making.

Session description

Provision of information around:

- The issues the council works on and the sorts of decisions it makes that it would like the public to feed in to.
- What the council currently offers itself as ways to: (1) feed in to decisions it makes; (2) get an issue onto the council's agenda.

Focus of activity:

- How aware they are that they can feed in in these ways, and of the different options available to do that
- Why people do/don't get involved in these ways at the moment

Feedback on this session

Stakeholders make a number of comments about the session 3 process:

- Some worry about information overload if people don't currently participate.
- The process is too wordy as it is - use picture voting to get people moving and to increase their own awareness.
- Use post-its to find out what are the barriers that have stopped you engaging in decision-making in the past.
- Report on how many people in each group / community feed in / did feed in.

Some feel the focus should be on the new structures, rather than the current system:

- Will the focus be on how to influence the new LAC structure or the current strong leader models? Concern you'll confuse people if you focus on the current routes.
- You need to explain how engagement is part of the new committees, and explain the flow between committees and LACs.

Some stakeholders recommend linking the new structure to citizen hubs / networks, as per the recent report published outlining this idea. They argue that this will give people an opportunity to influence local decisions.

3.4 Session 4 - Get people's reactions to ideas for new ways the council could seek their input

Session description

Provision of some information around:

- 'New' ways they could feed in in future

Focus of activity:

- Views on the suggestions. Would they make them more, or less likely to feed in? Or would they make no difference? What other ways to feed in would be better?
- Other than ways to feed in, what else, if anything, would need to change to encourage them to feed in?
- How to ensure they hear about opportunities to feed in?

Feedback on this this session

Stakeholders make the following comments on session 4:

- There could be repetition between this session and the previous session.
- As with the previous session, some suggest there needs to be an introduction to the new structures and model of LACs, and how people can feed in.
- One stakeholder questioned the premise of the session on "new ways people could feed in", saying that new ways for the council to get input had already been decided.
- Some stakeholders recommend presenting options re: new ways the public can feed in their views, which participants can then consider. They say be creative in approach.
- Some stakeholders describe barriers to participation that aren't about methods e.g. language, values, class and race. They also highlight the importance of considering methods of participation for people with disabilities, such as the D/D/deaf community.
- In response to the question "How to ensure they hear about opportunities to feed in?" stakeholders comment that you need to consider all options available, including linking with organisations that represent them.
- Stakeholders also comment that you need to ensure feedback is going to the right places - there needs to be accountability.

3.5 Session 5 - Understand people's wishes and priorities around transparency of decision-making.

Session description
Provision of some information around:

- How decisions will be made under the new governance structures and the sorts of information the council could make available.

Focus of activity:

- What information should be available to the public? What is essential? What is desirable?
- How to make this information easy to find?
- What makes information accessible / inaccessible?

Feedback on this session

- In response to the question "What information should be available? What is essential? What is desirable?" stakeholders comment:
    - All information should be available.
    - Make information available but help people understand the information they need to understand.
    - Use this information to keep things updated and simpler (for those who are comfortable with it).
    - What is your definition of desirable?
    - Essential/ desirable is different for everyone, dependent on group/needs.
- In response to the question "What makes information accessible / inaccessible":
    - Surely you know what makes things more accessible by now. This should be more around removing barriers to accessing information.
- Reflecting on "How decisions will be made" - some stakeholders comment that SCC has already made a decision and the results of the consultation won't change this.

3.6 Session description 6 - Thank you, administration, what happens next

Session description
Wrap up including, for example:

- Reminder of what will happen to what they say
- How we will feedback
- When incentives will be paid
- Filling out of feedback form, if relevant
- Thank you

Feedback on this session

- It should be clear and simple how participants can influence moving forward.
- The feedback form should be given at the beginning so people can fill it in as they go along.
- Consideration needs to be given to incentives and they should not just be monetary value, but they needed to be varied, for example:
    - Gift vouchers need to be used in different places / local communities
    - If done through link organisations, can incentives be given to local organisations to distribute based on knowing service users?
    - Could it be linked to investment in local communities?

4. Feedback on the methods for public engagement

Session description

Involve presented three methods that could be used to engage members of the public: community conversations, citizen researchers and community dialogue. Stakeholders then shared their views on these approaches, what might work better and any preference for a method or combination of methods that could be used.

This section looks at each method in turn, starting with the slide that was presented to stakeholders, followed by a summary of stakeholders' comments.

4.1 Method - Community Conversations

Some stakeholders feel that 'community conversations' would enable a greater depth of conversation and would perhaps be the most likely method of the three to get quality dialogue. They see it as a way to leverage existing relationships, for example with community groups, special interest groups and councillors, and to build new contacts for future engagement. They also reflect that this method would allow time for organisations to set the scene.

Who is engaged in community conversations was also discussed. Some list groups that should be engaged e.g. young people, university students, new and existing communities, elderly communities and people with disabilities. They note that some people will cross-over communities and identify with more than

one group, for example the D/deaf community, the LGBT + community, mental health service users and BAMER communities. Other stakeholders express concern that people from different ethnic minority groups are being incorrectly grouped together; for example, people from different countries in Africa being treated as representative of each other. One person asks whether people who participate in community conversations are expressing their own view or whether they can speak up for others.

Stakeholders feel that it needs to be clear and transparent how community organisations are selected to take part. They also highlight the importance of thinking carefully about distribution of funds. One suggestion is for larger organisations to be encouraged to partner with grassroots organisations. One stakeholder reflects that it would be a complex piece of work and you would need to ensure organisations have the capacity to deliver.

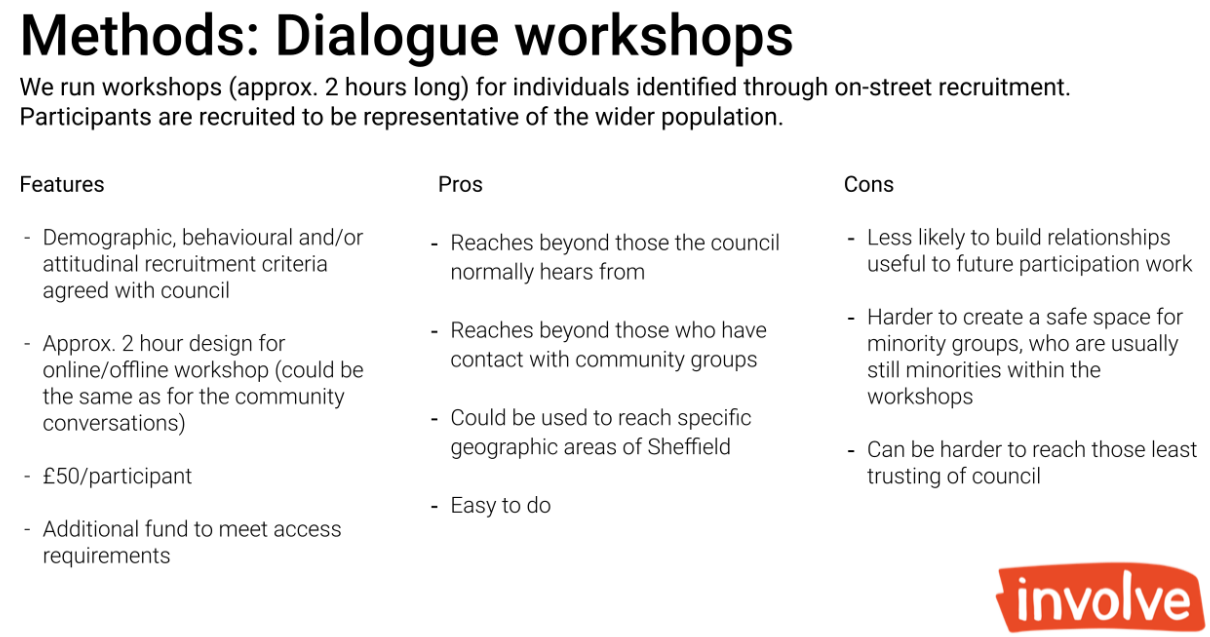
4.2 Method - Citizen researchers

Some stakeholders think the citizen researcher method could be useful for more specific pieces of work and to engage ‘unheard’ communities, such as the D/deaf community. However, others don’t support the use of this approach, describing it as “too transactional.” There is concern that the output of the engagement would be open to misrepresentation.

There is also concern about the budget that would be required for this method as presented and questions about its cost effectiveness. Some stakeholders think it is expensive for the output (20 questionnaires) unless this includes a BSL interpreter / language interpreter. Others worry there could be an issue with people on benefits having to temporarily come off them to be citizen researchers, given they would be paid £2,250.

Stakeholders explain that the citizen researcher model is similar to Sheffield's health champions scheme, of which there is a lot of experience and a track record. They suggest that paying £5000 to a community organisation would pay for a programme of volunteers, which would enable volunteers to improve the relationship between the council and local communities.

4.3 Method - Dialogue workshops



Some stakeholders see value in dialogue workshops as it would enable a variety of people who have been randomly selected to take part. However, others worry that some people may not feel confident to engage, and would face barriers to participate. They emphasise the importance of providing support to ensure people are able to participate. Other stakeholders are concerned about the potential for groupthink and peer pressure within dialogue workshops.

Some stakeholders are concerned about the budget required and cost effectiveness of this approach. They also query how meaningful the outputs would be given the substantial nature of the input and whether this method would only work geographically.

4.4 Comments on other methods and preferences

Stakeholders were encouraged to share their views on other methods that would work better, which generated the following specific suggestions:

- Drop-in sessions in local communities.
- Citizens' forum per ward as follows: citizens' assembly, intersectional approach, representative of community (attendance fee).
- Community festivals such as a city gala.

- Health champion model of developing local people who can facilitate discussions locally.
- Social media and online forums e.g. facebook page, which can be used to engage people and to promote engagement activities.
- A survey should be run alongside whichever method is used, with a prize draw for people who complete it, to encourage participation.

Some stakeholders expressed a preferred method or combination of methods. Some preferred a combination of community conversation and dialogue workshop, while others seem to lean towards community conversations. Others recommend a mixed method approach.

5. Content plan

Note: This is not a description of how we would run the event and what we would ask people to do

	Purpose	**Focus of content**
1.	Welcome people Ensure people are aware of key information about the event	**Introduction** including, for example: ● The purpose of the event, who commissioned it, what the council is, and what the event does/doesn't cover in terms of scope ● What will happen to what they say ● Input is anonymous (or pseudonymous, as accurate) ● Conversation guidelines ● Housekeeping
2.	Start people talking and thinking about the subject matter Understand people's topline perceptions of the council	**Icebreaker:** First three words that come in to your head when you think about the council [And possibly: three words that would describe the ideal council] *Notes: We are aiming for a short, easy way in that starts where people are at.*
3.	Understand how aware people are of current ways to feed in to decision-making Unpacking why people do / don't feed in at the moment	**Provision of information around:** ● The issues the council works on and the sorts of decisions it makes that it would like the public to feed in to. ● What the council currently offers itself as ways to: (1) feed in to decisions it makes; (2) get an issue onto the council's agenda. **Focus of activity:** ● How aware they are that they can feed in in these ways, and of the different options available to do that ● Why people do/don't get involved in these ways at the moment

4.	To get people's reactions to ideas for new ways the council could seek their input To unpack further barriers to participation that are not about participation methods	**Provision of some information around:** ● 'New' ways they could feed in in future **Focus of activity:** ● Views on the suggestions. Would they make them more, or less likely to feed in? Or would they make no difference? What other ways to feed in would be better? ● Other than ways to feed in, what else, if anything, would need to change to encourage them to feed in? ● How to ensure they hear about opportunities to feed in?
5.	To understand people's wishes and priorities around transparency of decision-making	**Provision of some information around:** ● How decisions will be made under the new governance structures and the sorts of information the council could make available. **Focus of activity:** ● What information should be available to the public? What is essential? What is desirable? ● How to make this information easy to find? ● What makes information accessible / inaccessible?
6.	Thank you Administration Reminder of what happens next and feedback	**Wrap up** including, for example: ● Reminder of what will happen to what they say ● How we will feedback ● When incentives will be paid ● Filling out of feedback form, if relevant ● Thank you