

Governance Committee

Wednesday 27 March 2024 at 2.00 pm

Town Hall, Sheffield, S1 2HH

The Press and Public are Welcome to Attend

Membership

Councillor Fran Belbin
Councillor Sue Alston
Councillor Simon Clement-
Jones
Councillor Dianne Hurst
Councillor Mary Lea
Councillor Mike Levery
Councillor Laura Moynahan
Councillor Alison Norris
Councillor Paul Turpin

PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE MEETING

The Governance Committee is leading on work to transition to a committee system of governance from May 2022. It is a politically proportionate Committee which will be tasked with oversight of the transitional work and will approve the recommendations to be made to Full Council.

The Committee will be outward facing. The Council will not be working in isolation on this project but will seek input from outside the organisation, ensuring citizens are engaged and are provided with opportunities to help shape this programme of work. The Council will also be engaging the professional support of agencies such as the Local Government Association, the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny and Monitoring Officers from other local authorities which have recently transitioned or are about to transition to a Committee system. This will ensure the Council is supported through this period and learns from best practice to ensure that the system implemented in Sheffield responds to the needs of our City.

A copy of the agenda and reports is available on the Council's website at www.sheffield.gov.uk. You may not be allowed to see some reports because they contain confidential information. These items are usually marked * on the agenda.

Members of the public have the right to ask questions or submit petitions to Governance Committee meetings and recording is allowed under the direction of the Chair. Please see the [website](#) or contact Democratic Services for further information regarding public questions and petitions and details of the Council's protocol on audio/visual recording and photography at council meetings.

PLEASE NOTE: Meetings of the Governance Committee have to be held as physical meetings. If you would like to attend the meeting, you must register to attend by emailing committee@sheffield.gov.uk at least 2 clear days in advance of the date of the meeting. This is necessary to facilitate the management of attendance at the meeting.

If you require any further information please contact Jay Bell email jay.bell@sheffield.gov.uk.

**GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE AGENDA
27 MARCH 2024**

Order of Business

- 1. Welcome and Housekeeping Arrangements**
- 2. Apologies for Absence**
- 3. Exclusion of Public and Press**
To identify items where resolutions may be moved to exclude the press and public.
- 4. Declarations of Interest** (Pages 5 - 8)
Members to declare any interests they have in the business to be considered at the meeting.
- 5. Minutes of Previous Meeting** (Pages 9 - 20)
To approve the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 28 February 2024
- 6. Public Questions and Petitions**
To receive any questions or petitions from members of the public.
- 7. Public Questions and Petitions Review** (Pages 21 - 58)
Report of the Director of Policy and Democratic Engagement
- 8. Update on the use of Urgency Provisions** (To Follow)
Report of the General Counsel
- 9. Work Plan** (Pages 59 - 68)
Report of the Head of Policy and Partnerships
- 10. Date of Next Meeting**
The next meeting of the Committee will be held on a Time and Date to be agreed

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ADVICE TO MEMBERS ON DECLARING INTERESTS AT MEETINGS

If you are present at a meeting of the Council, of its Policy Committees, or of any committee, sub-committee, joint committee, or joint sub-committee of the authority, and you have a **Disclosable Pecuniary Interest** (DPI) relating to any business that will be considered at the meeting, you must not:

- participate in any discussion of the business at the meeting, or if you become aware of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interest during the meeting, participate further in any discussion of the business, or
- participate in any vote or further vote taken on the matter at the meeting.

These prohibitions apply to any form of participation, including speaking as a member of the public.

You **must**:

- leave the room (in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct)
- make a verbal declaration of the existence and nature of any DPI at any meeting at which you are present at which an item of business which affects or relates to the subject matter of that interest is under consideration, at or before the consideration of the item of business or as soon as the interest becomes apparent.
- declare it to the meeting and notify the Council's Monitoring Officer within 28 days, if the DPI is not already registered.

If you have any of the following pecuniary interests, they are your **disclosable pecuniary interests** under the new national rules. You have a pecuniary interest if you, or your spouse or civil partner, have a pecuniary interest.

- Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain, which you, or your spouse or civil partner undertakes.
- Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from your council or authority) made or provided within the relevant period* in respect of any expenses incurred by you in carrying out duties as a member, or towards your election expenses. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.

*The relevant period is the 12 months ending on the day when you tell the Monitoring Officer about your disclosable pecuniary interests.

- Any contract which is made between you, or your spouse or your civil partner (or a body in which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, has a beneficial interest) and your council or authority –
 - under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and
 - which has not been fully discharged.

- Any beneficial interest in land which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, have and which is within the area of your council or authority.
- Any licence (alone or jointly with others) which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, holds to occupy land in the area of your council or authority for a month or longer.
- Any tenancy where (to your knowledge) –
 - the landlord is your council or authority; and
 - the tenant is a body in which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, has a beneficial interest.
- Any beneficial interest which you, or your spouse or your civil partner has in securities of a body where -
 - (a) that body (to your knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of your council or authority; and
 - (b) either -
 - the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or
 - if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.

If you attend a meeting at which any item of business is to be considered and you are aware that you have a **personal interest** in the matter which does not amount to a DPI, you must make verbal declaration of the existence and nature of that interest at or before the consideration of the item of business or as soon as the interest becomes apparent. You should leave the room if your continued presence is incompatible with the 7 Principles of Public Life (selflessness; integrity; objectivity; accountability; openness; honesty; and leadership).

You have a personal interest where –

- a decision in relation to that business might reasonably be regarded as affecting the well-being or financial standing (including interests in land and easements over land) of you or a member of your family or a person or an organisation with whom you have a close association to a greater extent than it would affect the majority of the Council Tax payers, ratepayers or inhabitants of the ward or electoral area for which you have been elected or otherwise of the Authority's administrative area, or
- it relates to or is likely to affect any of the interests that are defined as DPIs but are in respect of a member of your family (other than a partner) or a person with whom you have a close association.

Guidance on declarations of interest, incorporating regulations published by the Government in relation to Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, has been circulated to you previously.

You should identify any potential interest you may have relating to business to be considered at the meeting. This will help you and anyone that you ask for advice to fully consider all the circumstances before deciding what action you should take.

In certain circumstances the Council may grant a **dispensation** to permit a Member to take part in the business of the Authority even if the member has a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest relating to that business.

To obtain a dispensation, you must write to the Monitoring Officer at least 48 hours before the meeting in question, explaining why a dispensation is sought and desirable, and specifying the period of time for which it is sought. The Monitoring Officer may consult with the Independent Person or the Council's Standards Committee in relation to a request for dispensation.

Further advice can be obtained from David Hollis, General Counsel by emailing david.hollis@sheffield.gov.uk.

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Governance Committee

Meeting held 28 February 2024

PRESENT: Councillors Fran Belbin (Chair), Sue Alston (Deputy Chair), Simon Clement-Jones, Dianne Hurst, Mary Lea, Mike Levery, Laura Moynahan, Paul Turpin and Ruth Milsom (Substitute Member)

1. WELCOME AND HOUSEKEEPING

- 1.1 The Chair Councillor Fran Belbin welcomed everyone to meeting of the Governance Committee and introduction were given.
- 1.2 Members of the public had been invited to attend this meeting in person and via the hybrid connection to contribute to the discussions on agenda items 7 and 9.
- 1.3 The Chair proposed that item 9, Member Role Profile would be taken ahead of Item 8, Governance to support partnership working with the NHS and other partners across Sheffield. It was agreed that public questions submitted by Ruth Hubbard would be taken as part of item 9, as these questions directly related to this agenda item.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 2.1 An apology for absence was received from Councillor Alison Norris. Councillor Ruth Milsom attended as a Substitute Member.

3. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

- 3.1 There were no items identified where a resolution may be moved to exclude the press and public from the meeting.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 4.1 There were no interests declared at the meeting.

5. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

- 5.1 Resolved: That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 14th December 2023, were agreed as an accurate record.

6. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

- 6.1 The Committee had received a set of questions prior to the meeting from Ruth Hubbard that related to Item 9, Member Role Profiles, on the agenda. It was agreed that these would be considered alongside the agenda item.
- 6.2 No petitions had been received for consideration at the meeting.

7. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS REVIEW: LATEST DRAFT PROPOSALS AND NEXT STEPS

- 7.1 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Policy and Democratic Engagement, James Henderson regarding Public Questions and Petition Review: latest draft proposals and next steps. Laurie Brennan, Head of Policy and Partnership was in attendance to present the report to Members.
- 7.2 The purpose of the report was to provide the Committee with the developing draft proposals and recommendations from the review of public questions and petitions. The working draft report following the review along with the draft recommendation was provided and this had been developed with citizens and members. It was proposed that citizens were invited to provide final comments on the proposals by 6th March via the Governance Committee and the Have your Say Sheffield online engagement portal.
- 7.3 The finalised detailed proposals would be presented to the Committee on 27th March 2024 and subsequent approval at AGM in May 2024.
- 7.4 The Head of Policy and Partnership advised that the proposal would be to trial the new format from the new municipal year.
- 7.5 The Committee discussed the item and length and key points arising from the discussions were:-
- The constitution includes guidelines in terms of the parameters around public questions, however the General Counsel advised that clarity was needed to ensure these applied to all Committees of the Council and not just Full Council. There was a process in place that required the General Counsel and the Director of Policy and Democratic Engagement to check all Public Questions against the required parameters.
 - Councillor Turpin felt the 6 working deadline was useful, but that the deadline of 30 minutes before the meeting at the Chair's discretion should be an hour or to remove 'at the Chairs discretion'.
 - Councillor Turpin advised that he thought the LAC's worked well and allowed public discussion, but a triaging system was needed to allow actions to followed through.
 - Councillor Milsom advised that the LAC's were another way to engage and allowed for a lot more discursive discussion. The LAC's provided a good balance with the workshop style of meeting. Councillor Misom advised that there could be more dialogue with the public before a LAC or other meeting and felt that more time should be built into the system to allow this.
 - Councillor Milsom advised that there were more ways for the public to engage with the Council rather than through Public Questions and there was plenty of opportunity to create this and modernise how the Council

worked.

- Councillor Hurst welcomed the exercise, but the system could sometimes pose barriers. It was a big deal for citizens to attend Full Council and clarity should be given on whether we can do the things we say in our answers to public questions.
- Councillor Alston found the change in deadline would be helpful and would reduce the times the council had to say, 'we will come back to you with an answer'.
- Councillor Alston advised that a word limit would be preferred, rather than a time limit. Councillor Alston queried why there would be an option for a written answer to a statement when it was not a question. The Council should also bear in mind that if the proposed process for public questions was not working, changes would be made, the trial would not run for the whole 12 months.
- Ruth Hubbard found the report really positive and commented that Sheffield was the only Council in the Country to do a review on this. Ms Hubbard advised that she would like to see effort made in making it more accessible to ask a question and see much more upfront, she highlighted that SCC was committed to making the process more accessible. SCC did not see public questions as part of the system, they were dealt with separately. SCC was the only Council to get high numbers of public questions and the question was, was the Council not responsive enough to its engagement.
- John Johnson welcomed the work in progress and would like to see the process a lot less confrontational. Mr Johnson commented that there should be a mechanism to direct a question to another committee instead of disallowing.
- Councillor Paul Turpin advised that enabling anonymity in the public forum could be a good and a bad thing. He didn't wish for this to be used as a way for a member of the public to continue torment of a Councillor and would want to know how this would be monitored.
- Councillor Simon Clement-Jones wanted clarity around when someone leaves or turns up to a meeting will their question be read out and provided with an answer, this was part of accessibility, should it be read out? The Chair advised that all public questions should be part of the public domain.
- Jenny Carpenter added that allowing the public questions at the particular agenda points may allow for a better answer if the public could interact.

7.6 The Committee were broadly in agreement with the proposals put forward in the report. It was advised that all the information and comments made from this meeting would be collated together and brought back to the next meeting on

27th March 2024.

7.7 Resolved: That the Governance Committee:

1. thanks citizens and stakeholders for their contributions to the review of public questions and petitions;
2. considered and commented on the draft proposals to reform public questions and invited contributions from citizens who wished to participate in the discussions at the committee;
3. invites citizens and stakeholders to provide feedback on the current draft proposals by 6th March 2024; and
4. agrees to receive a final draft set of proposals at the next meeting of the Governance Committee on 27th March 2024.

8. MEMBER ROLE PROFILES

8.1 The Committee considered a report of James Henderson, Director of Policy & Democratic Engagement regarding Member Role Profiles.

8.2 The purpose of the report was to set out practical actions to achieve the aim of 'Improving how we explain the system' from Action 1.3 in the Governance Review Implementation Plan. The action includes producing clearer guidance on the roles and responsibilities for Chairs, Co-Chairs, Deputy Chairs and Group Spokespersons and how officers were expected to brief and interact with these roles.

8.3 Jason Dietsch, Head of Democratic Services presented the report to the committee and advised that the profiles were an overview of skills and were not a definitive guide. The Member Development Working Group were currently working on other role profiles.

8.4 The Chair invited Ruth Hubbard to ask her public questions and the Chair provided a response following each one.

a) There is no mention anywhere of roles or responsibilities in relation to LACs or how they fit. This seems odd, particularly, as I recall, when LAC arrangements have their own section in the constitution.

The Chair advised that –

- We were producing a new role profile for the role of LAC Chair and would take the opportunity to think about the role of all councillors in relation to Local Area Committees.
- The city councillor role profile did not specifically mention LACs (or other specific committees by name). However, there was a strong emphasis on the elected members' role as representative and advocate and them building relationships with residents and other organisations in their

communities.

City Council Role Profile: "Purpose/role: 1. Be a representative of your ward and an advocate for the communities within it. 2. Communicate effectively and build strong relationships with local residents, businesses, organisations and interest groups, keeping them informed about the issues that affect them and representing their views at council meetings. 3. Provide community leadership and support the Council to work in partnership with local communities and organisations to deliver better services and have a positive impact in the area. 4. Empower and enable the communities in your ward to develop solutions and work in partnership with you to deliver improvements to the local area"

- One of the points of reference for the work was the '21st Century Councillor' which emphasized the role of councillors as being strongly rooted in their wards and communities and working in partnership across their locality.
- The role profiles were not seeking to duplicate or replace the Constitution, the relationship with the LACs was set out in the Constitution. The role profiles make links to the procedures/terms of reference set out in the Constitution and the option to refer to other committees/decision making bodies, without being specific.
- We had tried to keep role profiles independent of each other, so they remained fit for the future depending on any changes in committee arrangements.

b) There is one mention of 'equalities' (if one looks closely) but a pretty passive one alongside a bunch of things in relation to following policy. Can't, and shouldn't, we do a bit better than this?

The Chair advised that; -

- Each role profile included adherence to the Councillor Code of Conduct, the Council's equality policies and the Council's values.
- This was included as point 1 in the City Councillor role profile to emphasize its importance.

"Responsibilities 1. Adhere to the Council's Code of Conduct for Elected Members, equality policies and Council Values; uphold the Seven Principles of Public Life and challenge behaviour which falls below expectations."

- The Code of Conduct was referred to in the role profiles and it included the role councillors have in relation to promoting equality and providing an environment free from harassment, discrimination, and victimisation and

bullying and by treating people with respect.

Part 2 of the Code of Conduct; “Members must promote equality and inclusion by providing an environment free from harassment, discrimination, and victimisation and bullying and by treating people with respect, regardless of their age, disability, gender, race, religion/ belief, sexual orientation or marriage/ civil partnership status...

“The Equality Act 2010 places specific duties on local authorities. Councillors and co[1]opted members have a central role to play in ensuring that equality issues are integral to the local authority's performance and strategic aims, and that there is a strong vision and public commitment to equality across public services.”

- We had considered equalities throughout the development of the role profiles and a summary of that thinking was in the Equalities Impact Assessment and the report to the Governance Committee.
- One of the purposes of the role profiles was to identify the learning and development, knowledge and skills and priority areas for member development activity and to make sure that these were incorporated in the member development programme. This included the need for all Members to have an awareness of equalities. Training and development in equalities was incorporated into the Member Development Programme and the MDWG was supporting the roll out of a level 2 equivalent certificate in equality, diversity and inclusion for elected members.

c) Scrutiny is mentioned simply as one of many responsibilities. It's my view that incorporating adequate scrutiny into the committee system is currently a weakness (and I think there is some evidence and examples that could be cited in relation to this). Should scrutiny be highlighted a little more, and.....

The Chair advised that:-

- It was acknowledged during the development of role profiles that, now the committee system was established, the responsibilities regarding scrutiny and policy development needed further work. The role profiles describe scrutiny as being part of every decision taken at a policy committee and a link to the Good Scrutiny Guide is provided for additional information and best practice guidance.

Role Profile – Chair of a Policy Committee: “Promote the four principles of good scrutiny (CfGS – The Good Scrutiny Guide) and encourage Committee Members to be involved in the pre- and post-scrutiny of all policies, budgets, performance and decisions relevant to the Committee, making Page 70 Appendix B evidence-based improvement recommendations as required and engaging with the public as appropriate.”

- The Committee had also begun work on a review of Policy Committee Remits and the suggested scope of that work included a review of the key responsibilities of the Policy Committees and considering whether they were being delivered effectively, including **policy review and scrutiny**, policy development and decision making.

d)this piece of work is mooted as being part of explaining the system to members of the public. However, nearly everyone will not plough through this level, of detail. Could thought be given to overarching or executive, short statements that might be used for basic explanatory purposes and emphasise the most important points? E.g. something like "Councillors are elected to represent their ward areas. They liaise widely with local people, communities and groups or stakeholders, play an important role in council decision-making, and oversee, scrutinise and review council proposals and decisions." (Or something pithier.)

The Chair advised that: -

- As part of the Governance review implementation plan (GRIP), we were doing some work to review information on the Council Website which explained how the committee system works. We aimed to include a short summary of councillors' roles as part of the review and rewriting of those pages.
- As pointed out, there was a lot of information in the role profiles and the Constitution about councillors' roles. The aim of the role profiles was to add clarity and detail to what those roles entail in practice whilst avoiding duplicating existing information.

e) One of the complaints of people out on three streets of Sheffield when It's Our City! were out and about across the city was that when they contacted cllrs they received no reply - or even that when they went to a councillor surgery the councillor was not there. I note the emphasis on communicating with, and responding to, members of the public and a variety of contact methods is mentioned. I know councillors can be extremely busy but I am concerned about over-promising and under-delivering which just fuels scepticism and discontent. This isn't necessarily a suggestion for the role profiles but can I make a plea, in practice at least, that councillors have at least one very reliable method of contact (whatever that is) perhaps over and above imagining they might be able to be everywhere doing everything all the time in relation to public contact?

The Chair thanked Ms Hubbard for making the point and advised that:-

- Each councillor had methods of contact on their webpage, which included email, a surgery or other type of appointment and preferred phone contact.
- We also had a telephone point of contact for all councillors, which was based in the Town Hall 0114 273 5380. We acknowledge that this could be better promoted/advertised as methods of contact.

8.5 Members discussed the report at length and key points to note were:-

- Clarity was provided around the Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee Chair profile and what its purpose was and that it should be recognised as part of the Committee system.
- It was advised that the Spokesperson and Deputy Chairs needed to be consistent.
- Time needed to be spent developing and scrutinising and that members should consider not voting on matters if they felt the matter had not been looked in detail.
- It was noted that members should be supported in developing skills.

8.6 The Head of Democratic Services advised that a skills audit in the questionnaire would discover talents and would assist us in focussing member development and addressing the needs of new councillors.

8.7 Resolved: - that the Governance Committee:-

1. reviews and provides final comments on the four role profiles of the City Councillor, Policy Committee Chair, Policy Committee Deputy Chair and Group Spokesperson;
2. adopts the four role profiles and recommends to Full Council that Article 7 in the constitution be updated as set out in Appendix B, Role of the Policy Committee Chair;
3. requests the Director of Policy & Democratic Engagement, in conjunction with the MDWG, identify the priority areas for member development activity arising from the content of the role profiles and to ensure that these are incorporated in the member development programme;
4. identify any further roles where city councillors perform for which role profiles might be developed in the future and to ask the Director of Policy & Democratic Engagement, in conjunction with the MDWG, to produce those role profiles for future consideration by the Governance Committee;
5. notes that the Independent Remuneration Panel will undertake a review of Members' Allowances and to request that the panel:
 - a) have regard to the new role profiles when reviewing the allowances; and
 - b) considers whether the role of Group Spokesperson should be awarded a Special Responsibility Allowance.

9. GOVERNANCE TO SUPPORT PARTNERSHIP WORKING WITH THE NHS AND OTHER PARTNERS ACROSS SHEFFIELD

9.1 The Committee considered a report of Greg Fell, Director of Public Health regarding Governance to support partnership working with the NHS and other partners across Sheffield.

- 9.2 Joe Horobin, Director of Integrated Commissioning was in attendance to present the report.
- 9.3 The report outlined the outcome of the Task and Finish Group established by the Governance Committee at its meeting on 12th October 2023 to consider appropriate Sheffield City Council membership of the Health and Care Partnership Board, the forum that supported the joint SCC and NHS Commissioning and planning through a pooled budget under Section 75 of the NHS Act 2006, as well as broader joint working that did not require pooled budgeting.
- 9.4 The report asked the Committee to consider and endorse a proposal for appointing Elected Member to the Board.
- 9.5 Councillor Paul Turpin advised that the time commitment would be at least 16 hours and there has been no mention of an SRA for this.
- 9.6 Councillor Ruth Milsom advised that this was an exciting space and was important for Community Health base creation.
- 9.7 Councillor Sue Alston thanked those who were part of the Task and Finish Group as the proposals were really useful.
- 9.8 Councillor Paul Turpin asked if an SRA could be considered for the role. It was advised that SRA's had to be agreed at the AGM. There were no SRA's for any external appointments at the moment and these would need to apply as a whole, not just for one appointment. Councillor Turpin put this proposal forward, however members of the committee were not in agreement.

Resolved: that the Governance Committee: -

- 9.9
1. endorses the proposal that places for Elected Members on the Health and Care Partnership should be added to the list of appointments to be made by Full Council (usually at the Annual General Meeting), guided in the first instance by the discussion set out in the report;
 2. agrees to receive a further report setting out revised Terms of Reference for the Health and Crae Partnership, following work to review these later in 2024, with a view to these guiding appointments to the HCP Board in the future;
 3. endorses the development of a Role Description for Elected Members taking up places on the HCP Board, based on the points set out in the report;
 4. Endorses the proposal that Council officers should work with NHS colleagues to develop an appropriate induction process for Elected Members who are appointed to the HCP Board, and develop a broader development package for Elected Members targeted at building

understanding of the NHS and the Council's relationship with it;

5. endorses the proposal that Officers should consider the best supporting arrangements for Elected Members based on the comments of the Task and Finish Group, building in capacity to develop these to reflect future learning.

10. WORK PROGRAMME

- 10.1 The Committee considered a report of the Head of Policy and Partnerships concerning its work programme.
- 10.2 The Policy and Improvement Officer (Alice Nicholson) gave an update on the programme and highlighted the key areas for Members attention.
- 10.3 Members of the committee made comments and suggestions relating to the work programme, as follows:
- 10.4 The Chair advised that arrangements for the Citizen Participation Group would come back to the March meeting of the Governance Committee. Suggestions had been made regarding appropriate people to be involved and meeting were currently taking place with those people.
- 10.5 Councillor Paul Turpin proposed that SRA's for external body appointments should be included on the Committee's work programme. The Chair advised that a discussion would be had regarding this at the next pre-meeting.
- 10.6 Councillor Mike Levery requested a review of the role of Finance Committee, this was not currently on the work plan. The General Counsel advised that this could be picked up as a discrete constitution change as this was in the Governance Committee's remit.
- 10.7 It was also suggested that the review of LAC's should be added to the programme. The Chair agreed that this would be discussed in the next pre-meeting.
- 10.8 Resolved:
 - 1) that the Committee's work programme , as set out in Appendix 1 to the report be agreed, including any additions and amendments or items to be confirmed identified in Part 1;
 - 2) the Committee notes the progress and indications of items which need more intensive work (eg. Citizen involvement, task and finish groups, policy review and development work) and consider implications for prioritisation of Governance Committee's forward workplan;
 - 3) the Committee considers any further issues to be explored by officers for inclusion on the future iteration of the work programme.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 11.1 The next meeting of the Governance Committee was scheduled to take place on 27th March 2024.

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Report to Policy Committee

Author/Lead Officer of Report:
Laurie Brennan, Head of Policy and Partnerships

Tel: 0114 2734755

Report of: Director of Policy and Democratic Engagement
Report to: Governance Committee
Date of Decision: 27th March 2024
Subject: **Public Questions and Petitions Review: draft proposals**

Type of Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) undertaken	Initial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Full <input type="checkbox"/>
Insert EIA reference number and attach EIA: 2608		
Has appropriate consultation/engagement taken place?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Has a Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) been undertaken?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If YES, give details as to whether the exemption applies to the full report / part of the report and/or appendices and complete below:-		
<p><i>"The (report/appendix) is not for publication because it contains exempt information under Paragraph (insert relevant paragraph number) of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended)."</i></p>		

Purpose of Report:

The Governance Committee have been working with citizens, stakeholders, council officers and Members to review and improve our to approach to public questions and petitions.

At the Governance Committee in February 2024, Members considered a draft of the developing proposals and discussed with a small number of stakeholders how they could be improved and finalised. As part of this, officers committed to providing the underpinning detail to the headline proposals to make sure they are deliverable within existing officer and Member capacity while seeking to meet the ambitions that citizens set out.

The report below summarises the revised proposals for Governance Committee to consider. A revised report on the public questions review is attached in Appendix 1 and a prototype summary of a public-facing guide is included in Appendix 2.

Governance Committee are asked to discuss and agree the revised proposals and recommend them to Full Council for consideration at the AGM on 15th May 2024.

Recommendations

That Governance Committee:

1. Consider the revised proposals to reform our approach to public questions and petitions.
2. Agree (pending further comments and amendments) to recommend the proposals for consideration by Full Council at its AGM on the 15th May 2024.

Background Papers:

Six Month Review of New Governance Arrangements,

<https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/documents/b27181/Item%207%20-%20Six%20Month%20Review%20of%20Governance%20Arrangements%20-%20report%20Wednesday%2017-May-2023%2011.30%20Council.pdf?T=9>

Lead Officer to complete:-					
1	<p>I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed.</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td>Finance: Matthew Ardern, Strategic Finance Manager</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Legal: David Hollis, General Counsel</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Equalities & Consultation: Ed Sexton, Senior Equalities and Engagement Officer</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Climate: N/A</td> </tr> </table>	Finance: Matthew Ardern, Strategic Finance Manager	Legal: David Hollis, General Counsel	Equalities & Consultation: Ed Sexton, Senior Equalities and Engagement Officer	Climate: N/A
Finance: Matthew Ardern, Strategic Finance Manager					
Legal: David Hollis, General Counsel					
Equalities & Consultation: Ed Sexton, Senior Equalities and Engagement Officer					
Climate: N/A					
	<i>Legal, financial/commercial and equalities implications must be included within the report and the name of the officer consulted must be included above.</i>				
2	<table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td>SLB member who approved submission:</td> <td>James Henderson, Director of Policy and Democratic Engagement</td> </tr> </table>	SLB member who approved submission:	James Henderson, Director of Policy and Democratic Engagement		
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3	<table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td>Committee Chair consulted:</td> <td>Cllr. Fran Belbin, Chair of Governance Committee</td> </tr> </table>	Committee Chair consulted:	Cllr. Fran Belbin, Chair of Governance Committee		
Committee Chair consulted:	Cllr. Fran Belbin, Chair of Governance Committee				
4	<p>I confirm that all necessary approval has been obtained in respect of the implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist and that the report has been approved for submission to the Committee by the SLB member indicated at 2. In addition, any additional forms have been completed and signed off as required at 1.</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td>Lead Officer Name: Laurie Brennan</td> <td>Job Title: Head of Policy and Partnerships</td> </tr> </table> <p>Date: 19th March 2024</p>	Lead Officer Name: Laurie Brennan	Job Title: Head of Policy and Partnerships		
Lead Officer Name: Laurie Brennan	Job Title: Head of Policy and Partnerships				

Public Questions and Petitions Review

Revised proposals

1. Proposal

- 1.1 Following the discussion at Governance Committee with citizens on 28th February 2024, we have revised the proposed changes to public questions and petitions.
- 1.2 This has taken account of Member comments, feedback from citizens and stakeholders and with appropriate consideration of the practical implementation of the proposals with the capacity we have available.
- 1.3 Governance Committee are asked to consider the revised proposals and agree to recommend that Full Council consider the reforms as part of the AGM in May 2024.

2. Finalising the proposals for public questions, statements and petitions

- 2.1 The report attached in Appendix 1 sets out an updated overview of the review and updated versions of the proposals that Governance Committee considered at its last meeting on 28th February 2024. The initial proposals were built from the insights offered by citizens, Members and officers on how we could improve the overall experience and accessibility of PQs and petitions at Sheffield City Council.
- 2.2 Governance Committee have worked with citizens and stakeholders on proposals through online surveys and public workshops to create a more coherent package of ways in which citizens can engage in Sheffield's democratic meetings.
- 2.3 Ahead of the February Governance Committee meeting, the Chair wrote to all participants that have contributed to the review to date inviting them to attend the Committee's meeting on the 28th February and contribute to a conversation about the proposals. Those who could not attend but wanted to contribute further were invited to share their views via an online survey on the Have Your Say Sheffield consultation hub where respondents could say whether they agreed or disagreed with each draft recommendation and add wider comments¹.
- 2.4 The survey ran from the 28th February to the 6th March but only received 3 responses. Therefore, we will not focus heavily on the responses due to very limited statistical reliability. However, some of the key messages from those who contributed were:

¹ The survey is now closed but the landing page and supportive material is on Have Your Say Sheffield here: [Review of Council's approach to Public Questions | Have Your Say Sheffield](#)

- **Changes overall** - It appears from these changes that you want to limit what people can ask, the council should answer any and all relevant questions that members of the public want to ask.
- **For written answers** - If a written answer is given, there must be enough time for it to be read and understood and for the questioner to arrange to attend the meeting if they want to ask a supplementary
- **In reference to word or time limit on asking a question** - One minute is not very long.
- **Time allotted in agenda for public questions** – Public questions need one hour time allocated in meeting.

3. Ensuring deliverability – setting out the detail of how we will implement the proposed changes

3.1 At the 28th February meeting, Governance Committee also heard that there was a need to refine the proposals and also develop the technical and constitutional specifics of how the proposals will work in practice². This includes clarifying deadlines for the submission of questions and statements, detailing timescales for publishing responses and setting word limits for questions and statements.

3.2 Key to the practical application of the new approach is ensuring that we strike a balance between:

- enabling and improving the involvement and accessibility of our democratic meetings
- improving the quality, consistency and speed of responses within defined timescales
- operating within the capacity and resource limits of the council (ie. Officer time to both manage the process and develop responses).

3.3 Working with the General Counsel, Director of Policy and Democratic Engagement and the Head of Democratic Services, the paper in Appendix 1 details the updated proposals following citizen, Member and officer feedback.

3.4 To summarise:

Overall approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearer approach to public questions aligned to committee remits and specific agendas • Introduce new ability to make statements which will be published on the public record.
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² See paragraph 3.2 here:

<https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/documents/s66247/7.%20PQs%20cover%20paper%2028.02.24.pdf>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 200-word limit for written questions, supplementary and verbal questions. Can include sub-questions/multiple parts • Maximum of two participations per person in any council meeting (ie. Full Council or Policy Committees). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Eg. 1 written (max 200 words) question (plus any supplementary) & 1 agenda-related question (max 200 words) • Role for the Chair to manage and order questions in an appropriate way to bring balance, fairness and parity to the issues and voices heard at our meetings. • Petitions will continue to be treated as now - separate to public questions, but within the same time allocation on the agenda.
Questions within the remit of the Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written questions submitted 6 working days before the date of a committee meeting with 200-word limit (inc. sub-parts) • Written questions and responses will be published online by 12 noon, 2 days before relevant Committee meeting. • Questioner can request a supplementary question (200 words) and must submit their supplementary by 12 noon on the day before the meeting. One supplementary question per person, asked at discretion of the Chair and within 30min (Policy Committee) or 60min (Full Council) allocated time. • Written questions will not read out in the meeting as they will be available with responses online before the meeting.
Questions relating to the agenda of the Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submitted by 12 noon, 3 working days before the date of a committee meeting to enable citizens to ask questions based on the published papers • Questions will be asked verbally (including via weblink or read on behalf of the questioner) at discretion of the Chair and within 30min time allocation (Policy Committees) or 60min (Full Council). • 200-word limit • Verbal responses provided by Chair or to be provided in writing and published within 10 working days if not possible by the meeting.
Statements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be submitted in writing in advance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 12 noon, 6 days for statements relevant to the remit of the PC or Full Council ○ 12 noon, 3 days for statements relating to the published agenda of a PC or Full Council

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum of 200 words / 60-90 seconds of speaking time - presented at the discretion of the Chair who will seek to ensure a fair representation of voices and issues within the allocated 30mins. • Maximum of one statement per meeting, per person • All statements will be published for the public record • No commitment to responding to a statement however, Policy Committee Chair will reserve the right of reply in the meeting if deemed appropriate
Improving accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling ability to ask verbal questions (3 day and supplementary Qs) or make statements via weblink. • Enable verbal questions to be asked on your behalf
Improving customer experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved online process for submitting questions. • Online tracker for citizens to check on the status of a question and find the published outcomes
Improved support and guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop new, simple information, advice, and guidance to make it easier for more people to know how to engage in democratic meetings.

3.5 Timetable for the next steps

27th March	Governance Committee discuss final proposals
April	Write-up of papers for Full Council
7th May	Publication of papers for AGM
15th May	Council AGM

3.6 It is proposed that the new proposals will be implemented for 12 months, and we will keep the new system under review to continuously improve the system and address any unforeseen issues that may result from the implementation of the new system.

4. **Risk analysis and implications of the decision**

4.1 Equality Implications

4.1.1 Our legal duties under the Equality Act 2010 include having due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct,
- advance equality of opportunity, and
- foster good relations

4.1.2 The developing proposals to reform public questions and petitions are intended to improve inclusivity and accessibility to participating in our

democratic meetings. This includes enabling citizens to ask questions via hybrid links, enabling questions to be read out on behalf of citizens, and enabling people to remain anonymous on the public record (while contact details must be supplied upon submission).

- 4.1.3 An initial Equality Impact Assessment has been started and will be updated and published with the final proposals in March.

4.2 Financial and Commercial Implications

- 4.2.1 Not applicable at this stage as expected that the changes will be delivered within current resources.
- 4.2.2 As with the overall impact of the proposals, the resource and capacity implications of the proposed changes to the public questions model will be kept under review.

4.3 Legal Implications

- 4.3.1 There is no legal requirement to have public questions in any form at the public meetings of the Council. Currently the ability to ask questions is included in the Council's constitution that is maintained under s9P of the Local Government Act 2000.
- 4.3.2 It is proposed that in future the ability for public questions is retained in the constitution, but that the detail of how questions should be asked are contained in a scheme published on the Council's website. Such scheme should be published by the Monitoring Officer and overseen by the Governance Committee.
- 4.3.3 The Council publishes both the questions and answers as part of its minutes and is therefore potentially liable for matters contained in that publication. The scheme should contain provisions as to the scope of public questions permissible and when and how any questions might not be permitted.

4.4 Climate Implications

- 4.4.1 N/A

5 Reasons for recommendations

- 5.1 The paper provides a revised draft of the proposals to reform public questions and petitions. The recommendations set out an opportunity for Members to reflect on the revised proposals and before consider recommending the reforms to Full Council as part of its AGM in May 2024.

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REVIEW OF APPROACH TO PUBLIC QUESTIONS AT COUNCIL MEETINGS

Report of findings and recommendation

March 2024

1 Background and introduction

1.1 This review of our approach to public questions at Council meetings is a response to recommendation of the six-month Governance review.

1.2 As part of the Transition to Committees, we worked with citizens and stakeholders to agree a short set of Design Principles which captured how Members and citizens wanted to see decision making happen in Sheffield through the Committee System. These Principles set out that in making decisions, SCC would aim to be:

...**be democratic**. Sheffield City Council is committed to local democracy. ...**be open and trustworthy**. Make decisions publicly, so people can tell who is responsible for what.

...**include all Councillors**. Show what decisions everyone's local councillors are involved in.

...**listen to everyone**. Have the voice of residents at the heart of our decisions.

...**be cutting edge and keep improving**. Respond to the fast-changing world by trying new things and checking often whether it's working.

1.3 As part of our commitment to continuously improve our governance, we undertook a Six-month Review of the new Committee System in 2022/23 to look at early learning and development opportunities during which Governance Committee heard a clear message from stakeholders, Members and officers that the current approach to public questions is not meeting expectations and needs to be reviewed if it is to be an effective route for citizen voice and democratic accountability. In particular, the Committee heard:

- **Citizens are dissatisfied with the speed and manner of responses received to public questions** – albeit with relatively small numbers, 44% of citizens who have asked questions and responded to the Review survey said that they were either dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied with speed of their response to a public question; and 56% were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the manner of the response received.
- **Confusion and duplication** – there is a sense that public questions are not always directed to the most appropriate forum, there is duplication of questions at Policy Committees, Full Council and LACs, and sometimes questions are 'bounced' between committees – causing confusion and delays to responses. There is also a potential issue of duplication and inconsistency with answers to questions on the same issue asked at LAC and city-level committee level.
- **Who responds** – some Members feel that the current approach, whereby responses are formulated by officers and the Chair of a committee, is not appropriate in the new system, where the question is addressed to the whole Committee.

- **Time and value** – some citizens felt that 30 minutes is inadequate for dealing with public questions when significant decisions are being made; some felt the process is too formal and rigid with no scope for asking supplementary questions; and some argued that it isn't a meaningful tool for engagement and influencing decision making.
- **Accessibility and visibility** – some citizens would like to be able to submit questions anonymously or attend the meeting virtually to ask a question. Some citizens were concerned that where written responses are provided, they are not published with the minutes, so they are not on the public record.

2 The review process

2.1 Scope

2.1.1 In July 2023 the Governance Committee set out its review of approach to public questions at Council meetings. The proposed purpose of the review was to:

1. Ensure the process for citizens to ask public questions is clear, that public questions are triaged in a way that directs them to the most appropriate forum and that those forums are easy to access.
2. Consider processes for responding to public questions and the interplay between timescales and quality of responses so that we can best achieve a consistent approach that is fit for purpose in the Committee System.
3. To undertake the review creatively with citizens and stakeholders, developing proposals which learn from the experiences of those involved within resource and capacity constraints.

2.1.2 Specific areas of focus were to actively seek feedback from, and test proposals with, citizens and stakeholders; and report into the Governance Committee. Also that the work on public questions clarify the process for members of the public submitting a question to the Full Council that had not been adequately dealt with by a Policy Committee.

2.1.3 A cross-party task and finish group of members from Governance Committee was set up. The membership is Councillors Fran Belbin (task and finish group Chair), Sue Alston, Mike Lavery, Sioned-Mair Richards, Paul Turpin. They have been working with citizens and stakeholders, to a scope focused on improving the awareness, process, quality, and experience of public questions.

2.2 Engagement activity

- 2.2.1 An online survey open to all was available on our Have Your Say Sheffield site September 2023, it was publicised in our citizen newsletter, there were two separate surveys to gather information about people's experience of either asking a public question or presenting a petition at Council meetings, the Governance Committee particularly wanted to hear from people who had never asked a question or presented a petition to find out why they haven't and if we could do anything to encourage in the future.
- 2.2.2 Members of the Governance Committee held an in-person public input workshop on 14th September 2023, which was for the Committee to listen to people's experiences of asking or not asking a public question or presenting a petition in Sheffield. This complemented the approach taken in the online surveys.
- 2.2.3 The Governance Committee also received a submission of a report¹ a citizen network known as Sheffield Oversight and Scrutiny (S.O.S.) which captures perspectives and recommendations from an independently organised online public event.
- 2.2.4 In November 2023, we also asked officers from across the City Council to share their views on their experience of managing and responding to public questions. This included officers who manage the receipt of public questions and those who assist with responding.
- 2.2.5 Also in November 2023, the Committee's task and finish group held a solutions workshop with citizens. Attendees were people who responded to the survey and had asked to be kept involved. The workshop was hybrid (in person and online) and worked through the packages of key issues that had been identified in the initial evidence gathering.
- 2.2.6 Around the time of the 28th February Governance Committee, the Chair personally invited workshop participants to attend the Committee meeting to comment on the proposals, in addition a survey asking for comment on these proposals was targeted at workshop participants and those who had previously commented through survey and left an email contact. The survey asked views on the recommendations in the proposals for change, to say if they agree with, disagree with, neither agree or disagree, or suggest a change to the recommendation.

¹ The SOS Public Questions and Petitions Report is available to download online here: <https://www.sos-sheffield.org.uk/>

3 The purpose of public questions

- 3.1.1 Whilst it is recognised that our existing approach to public questions and petitions has some strengths (eg. relatively flexible and compared to some local authorities), there are definitely improvements that can be made to enhance the quality and experience of public questions and petitions for all involved but particularly for citizens.
- 3.1.2 The Governance Committee has heard what our stakeholders said and seek to create a clearer statement of why public questions matter.
- 3.1.3 Already [our Constitution](#) in Part 2c sets out the rights that citizens have to participate in meetings of Sheffield City Council. To enhance this, Governance Committee have suggested the following statement, to set out our view of the purpose of PQs:

“The citizens of Sheffield have a right to participate in the meetings of Sheffield City Council, our Committees and other Council bodies.

Public Questions are one of the means of holding the Council to account, of getting items on public record, to raise public attention to an opportunity or issue.

We welcome and want to encourage and enable greater citizen involvement in our city’s democracy and are committed to ensuring that any citizen can raise a public question (or petition) and should expect an accurate and timely response that answers the question or issue raised.

Public questions are one way in which citizens can engage. They are a mechanism for respectfully engaging in the remit or agenda of a meeting, not a mechanism for engaging in detail or individual complaints or issues, they are not intended for engaging in debate or conversation.”

4 Findings, solutions development, and test

4.1 Findings

- 4.1.1 A summary of the findings from the evidence gathering is available here:
<https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/documents/s63615/Approach%20to%20PQ%20interim%20findings%20slidepack%20for%2012.10.2023.pdf>
- 4.1.2 Key findings / issues that Governance Committee heard from citizens:

1. **Quality of response and experience** – most people who have asked a public question feel they have not been listened to and that the quality of response they received did not meet their expectations. Citizens said that they want more political/democratic accountability for responses (ie. Members responding to questions in public meetings even if content is officer-prepared).
2. **Barriers to asking questions** – citizens cited significant barriers which prevent them asking PQs. This includes physical and EDI barriers (physically attending a meeting at a set time during work hours; barriers due to protected characteristics eg. caring responsibilities, disabilities) and mental barriers (needing confidence to speak in public meetings).
3. **Complex process** – people find our current process for PQs complicated and unclear. There were concerns about the time taken to receive a response, hard to get updates on progress and hard to find evidence of any impact that a PQ has had. People who submitted petitions were more positive about the process.
4. **Awareness** – there is a lack of awareness about the ability to ask PQs and raise petitions beyond a core group of citizens. People feel that the information, guidance, and advice that we currently provide is unclear and inaccessible. It does not give people the tools they need to participate.

4.1.3 The views on petitions were less critical than for Public Questions but clearly, the user experience is different and of a smaller scale for petitions.

4.2 Solutions development, and test

4.2.1 All of the responses to surveys, output from workshops, the submission from S.O.S, and insight from officers informed an initial long list of solutions. These covered five themes:

1. Public awareness;
2. Triage and track;
3. How question is asked;
4. Quality of response;
5. Influence and impact.

The Committee's task and finish group tested and explored a long list of solutions at a workshop with citizens involving people who had responded to the surveys and had indicated that they would like to stay involved in the review. We also brought insight from officers into the workshop.

- 4.2.2 Following the develop and test stage, Members of the Committee met in December 2023 to look at all the insight and proposed solutions to consider in detail, what they might mean in practice, their deliverability and priorities for action and implementation.
- 4.2.3 The changes that have been proposed by citizens, Members and officers fall into three broad categories:
- **those that are quicker to implement** - as they are about improving our process or action within existing ways of operating, including improving information and guidance and boosting awareness and accessibility through communications.
 - **actions that require approval (consensus beyond Governance Committee)** - including those that likely require a change in the constitution; and
 - **improvements that require a system change or a technical solution** - these are likely to carry a greater resource input (time and priority) and possibly budget and cost pressure, including a publicly accessible system to track the journey of a question through to a response.
- 4.2.4 The proposals on public questions and petitions form part of the continuous improvement of our governance model in Sheffield City Council and will complement the planned work in 2024, including on the remits of policy committees, reviewing and enhancing the role of LACs and transforming our approach to citizen involvement and participation.

5 Recommendations

5.1 Overarching proposals

- 5.1.1 There are 5 overarching proposals responding to what we heard, within each there are recommendations which provide more specifics on the steps we could take for Members to consider.
1. Improving the quality and overall experience of public questions
 2. Making public questions modern and accessible for all citizens
 3. Creating a clear, open, and transparent process so that citizens can track the journey of a question from submission to response and action
 4. Improving advice and guidance for citizens to improve
 5. Purpose of public questions – a statement of principle, and ongoing review

Proposal 1: Improving the quality and overall experience of public questions

<p>What we've heard</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of those that had experience of asking public questions, the overwhelming majority were dissatisfied with the response they received. • People who have asked questions said that they didn't feel listened to, that responses from Members and officers could be abrupt, and that the visible impact or change from their question was negligible. • There should be clear accountability for responses – distinction between officers providing detail and substance in response to questions and politicians answering in public meetings. • There are a range of views on timeliness of responses – some are prepared to wait longer for quality answer, and some prefer an on-the-spot answer.
<p>Recommendations</p>	<p>The proposition is to undertake a twelve-month trial in the 2024/25 municipal year of a renewed approach to public questions.</p> <p>The trial will apply to Full Council and all Policy Committees and the changes are set out below in recommendations below. For Local Area Committees, the approach to public questions will remain unchanged (see 1.12).</p> <p>We will undertake a full evaluation of the trial after 12 months to inform, give insight to the refinement or continuation of these approaches for future years (see 1.13).</p> <p>Recommended specific changes:</p> <p>1.1 Questions relating to the remit of Full Council or of relevance to the city or within the remit of a Policy Committee can be submitted by 12 noon, 6 working days before a meeting, the question and response will be published as a written answer by 12 noon, 2 days before the meeting.</p> <p>1.2 On reading published written responses, citizens are able to request to ask a supplementary question to their original question (200-word limit, 1 supplementary question per person, per meeting). The supplementary question must be submitted in writing by 12 noon on the day before the relevant meeting. The opportunity to ask a</p>

supplementary question will be at the Chair's discretion: ie. if time is available and priority will be given to new verbal questions and statements first.

- 1.3 **Questions relating to the published agenda** of Full Council or a policy committee should be submitted by 12 noon, 3 working days in advance of meeting. These have a 200-word limit and may be asked verbally at the relevant meeting or read out by a nominated person. A verbal response will be provided at the meeting by Chair or will be provided in writing within 10 working days if not possible at the time of the meeting.
- 1.4 Introduce the ability to make **statements**:
- a. Must be submitted in writing by:
 - i. 12 noon, 6 days in advance where a statement relates to the **remit** of Full Council / policy committee; or
 - ii. 12 noon, 3 days in advance where the statement relates to the **published agenda** of Full Council / policy committee.
 - b. Maximum of 1 statement per meeting, per person
 - c. 200-word limit / 60-90 seconds speaking time
 - d. A citizen may request to read out their statement in the meeting; or a citizen may choose to submit a statement in writing.
 - e. In either format, statements will not be responded to in the meetings, but all statements will be published for on the public record.
 - f. No commitment to responding to a statement however, the Lord Mayor or relevant Policy Committee Chair will reserve the right of reply in the meeting if deemed appropriate and time allows.
- 1.5 Maximum of two participations per person in any council meeting (ie. Full Council or Policy Committees). For example, 1 written question (plus any supplementary) & 1 agenda-related question (max 200 words); or 1 statement (max 200 words) and 1 agenda question (max 200 words).
- 1.6 Introduce a consistent word limit of 200 words on all public questions, supplementary questions (including sub-questions/parts) and statements.

	<p>1.7 Members to receive draft responses to questions (written and verbal) at least 1 working day before a meeting in order to consider responses.</p> <p>1.8 Subject to the Chair's discretion, the time for public questions, petitions and statements at meetings will remain at 30 minutes in policy committees and 60 minutes at Full Council.</p> <p>1.9 Chair will try and order questions in an appropriate way to bring balance and fairness and to provide parity to the issues and voices heard at our meetings.</p> <p>1.10 Introduce a new advice, guidance, and a consistent response format for officers to improve consistency and quality of responses.</p> <p>1.11 Petitions will continue to be treated as now separate to public questions, but within the same time allocation on the agenda.</p> <p>1.12 The approach to PQs at Local Area Committees (LACs) will remain unchanged and people will continue to be able to ask questions from the floor at LAC meetings.</p> <p>1.13 Citizen evaluation and review at end of trial.</p>
Why we are proposing this	<p>The current system is flexible but:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can cause pressure point for those supplying the response, especially for example turnaround on questions for Full Council or a Policy Committee; • there is a narrow time between agenda publishing and deadline for acceptance of a public question; • there is often a poorer quality of standard of response and/or lack of detail when there is limited response time. <p>The introduction of statements, and the ability to ask a supplementary question is a step change improving the nature of participation for citizens in Council meetings.</p> <p>The Committee are considering for example a principle that if you ask a question more days in advance of a meeting you will get a written response and it will be in the meeting record, if less days in advance, you should get a verbal response at the meeting or a written response within 10 working days.</p>
Timescale	Start of Municipal year 2024/25 subject to Full Council approval

Proposal 2: Making public questions modern and accessible for all citizens

<p>What we've heard</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People recognise the ability to ask public questions and raise petitions is an important part of our democracy. • Many who have asked questions have had negative experiences • There are equality and diversity barriers to asking questions in a meeting in a physical place at a specific time which impacts on a number of protected characteristics. • People can feel intimidated by the context in which Committee meetings take place – large, formal, public spaces in the town hall – and this is an important barrier to engagement. • Some identification of inconsistency in approach between committees – e.g. Whether submitted questions are read out if a citizen cannot attend in person. • People want the opportunity to be anonymous, to not attend but to still have questions read, answered, and publicly logged.
<p>Recommendations</p>	<p>2.1 Enable public questions or petitions to be presented on-screen, such as Teams or equivalent (or recorded videos). If not possible for technical reasons, ask for submission in writing which will then be read out.</p> <p>2.2 Enable a questioner to request that a question is read out on their behalf. This would also be an alternative if virtual route is not available.</p> <p>2.3 Enable citizens to submit a written question and request a written response without needing to attend a meeting, and the question and response go on the public record.</p> <p>2.4 Enable for anonymity in the public forum, but not in submission (i.e. submission must include name and contacts).</p>

<p>Why we are proposing this</p>	<p>Introducing these improvements to how questions are asked responds directly to the issues raised by citizens. The steps should increase flexibility, enable greater participation, and increase accessibility for all, removing the barrier of having to physically attend a meeting to ask.</p> <p>To make this work there will need to be clear expectation of timelines for submission, and when questioner can expect a response, and in what format the response will be on the record – these aspects will be a critical element of how the tacker will operate and the content of the guidance to explain lead in times and what form of response you can expect.</p>
<p>Timescale</p>	<p>Start of Municipal Year 2024/25 with 2.1, subject to availability of tech solution in all meetings</p>

We will develop some simple guidance to support the virtual presentation of verbal questions, supplementary questions and statements (eg. Zoom, Teams or equivalent). This could include:

- Intention is provide parity for those asking online and those in the room to ensure that those seeking to engage in a committee meeting are not prejudiced by not being able to attend in person but equally are not advantaged either.
- We will request:
 - No use of backgrounds, except standard blurred background and use of standard settings available in Teams/Zoom
 - No screensharing / visuals / videos
 - Participants will need to join for a check of the technology 10mins before the start of the relevant meeting and provide contact details
- Backup – in case of technology issues, questions will be read out on behalf of the citizen by a Member or officer.

Proposal 3: Creating a clear, open and transparent process so that citizens (and officers and Members) can track the journey of a question from submission to response and action

<p>What we've heard</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People felt strongly that the existing process was complicated, unclear, and hard to access.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondents felt that all questions and answers should be published for all Committees; that they should be able to be tracked through the process, and that there should be a clear log of the question, the response and action that can be publicly accessed. • There were clear concerns about the time taken to receive a response, that reasons for delays are unclear, and in some cases, people said responses were not provided at all or the quality of response did not meet citizen expectations. • People want to see the impact of their questions or petitions and whether their voice influenced change in the decision or approach. • Those that have raised petitions were more positive about the system of submission but less so about how they could find out about the impact and response
Recommendations	3.1 Develop a portal, to submit a public question – simple online form to make it easy for anyone to submit a question and indicate where they would like to have their question heard.
	3.2 Introduce an online tracker – simple system to track petitions and questions so that anyone can see the progress and status of a public question, find answer provided, and find what has changed as a result. This will be an open online system, navigable and searchable.
Why we are proposing this	<p>To improve the clarity and consistency of the PQs approach, we need to better manage the ‘journey’ of questions so that citizens are easily able to find the latest information about their questions and answers.</p> <p>Having a single system and approach will also help officers and Members in the Council ensure that responses are in a consistent form and make it easier to provide citizens with updates on the progress of questions and answers.</p> <p>The approach should not constrain or gatekeep but rather improve accessibility, consistency, and timeliness of response.</p> <p>An open and transparent system will also bring benefits to petitions too.</p> <p>The intention is it will include all Committees.</p>

Timescale	First iteration to be developed for implementation during 2024/25
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Proposal 4: Improving advice and guidance for citizens to ask public questions and raise petitions

What we've heard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most respondents said that they hadn't asked a public question and didn't know they could. • Citizens want simple and clear information about the process, how it works, what happens, what the impact would be and about the committees themselves. • The information that was available wasn't very clear, accessible, or easy to find. • The timescales involved in submitting and receiving answers to public questions need to be clearer. There is an interconnected association between timescale and the quality of response.
Recommendation	<p>4.1 A 'get involved' information and guidance source, that works as a webpage, and is printable.</p> <p>4.2 This would include information on how to be involved, to ask a question, submit a petition, what can be expected if you do any of these things.</p> <p>4.3 Seek advice from our communication professionals and stakeholders for the best way to promote public questions and the new guidance.</p>
Why we are proposing this	<p>Contribute to raising public awareness, capturing interest from our landing page, with communications and campaigns that signpost this. It would be a simplification of our information, to make it easier for citizens to access and participate. It will be clear about options available, including accessing individual Councillors.</p> <p>We explored the option of a triage system that helped citizens navigate to where they should ask their question. Citizens told us that that they were concerned that this would result in gatekeeping or taking away informed choice of where to ask.</p>

	<p>Providing better information and guidance therefore puts the decision of where and what to ask into the hands of citizens and reduces the organisations input to ‘oversee’ and manage the detail of participation.</p> <p>Members are keen that the versed still have the right to go where they want to ask a question, and there are those who want guidance. The guidance will also function to manage expectations for participation, outcomes.</p>
Timescale	Municipal Year 2024/25

Proposal 5: Purpose of public questions – a statement of principle, and ongoing review

What we’ve heard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People ask a question to publicise an issue, to put on record a citizen or community view on an issue or consequence of an action of the Council. Often as a last resort or in frustration with response so far. People ask to be involved in developing our democratic systems.
Recommendations	<p>5.1 Adopt statement of principle around our approach to public questions in paragraph 3.1.2 of this report</p> <p>5.2 To drive improvement carry out regular experience survey of those asking public questions.</p> <p>5.3 Ensure future opportunities for citizens to feedback and be involved in ongoing review of this trial approach to public questions.</p>
Why we are proposing this	<p>We want to make clear what we see as the purpose of public questions, and we welcome citizen involvement in democratic process.</p> <p>We want to continue to find out why people ask questions, and to drive improvement. To find out if you feel like your question was answered, were you happy with it, was it the answer you wanted, was it understandable if not the answer you wanted, are there further improvements to asking public questions or petitions you would like to suggest, as well as finding out why you asked a question.</p>

	We want to keep listening, to keep citizens involved in how we improve our approach to public questions.
Timescale	Start of Municipal Year 2024/25

6. Future consideration and exploration

- 6.1 There are matters that have been given initial consideration, but judgement reserved for time being whilst the above recommendations are implemented,
- 6.2 Some may come into their own once the priority elements are underway, so they are not discounted, but on the watch list as the new approach to public questions at Council meetings takes shape, these include:
- Introduce a right of reply.
 - Keep public question to an agenda topic.
 - Public questions be taken at end of a meeting.

7. Monitoring and Citizen Involvement

- 7.1 The changes are an ongoing constant opportunity for citizen involvement in our democratic process. We see the review and recommendations as a response to insight from citizens and the trial will enable us to test, review, and improve, Citizens will be a key part of that and we will continue to listen and iterate the approach over the coming year as part of our wider focus on Citizen Participation and Community Involvement.
- 7.2 At the outset we set out there will be a review of the trial in recommendation 1 that will involve citizen and stakeholder reflection and experience, at the end of the trial, and during if necessary. During the trial we will keep the new model under constant review and reserve the right to amend and update if any unforeseen issues occur.
- 7.3 Recommendations include additional monitoring of how the new approach is being received by gathering qualitative data from those asking questions on perception of response received. Over the period of the trial we can further monitor how the

new approach is being received by gathering qualitative data from those asking questions on perception of response received. We propose to use our Have Your Say Sheffield platform.²

² You can visit, register and sign in to Have Your Say Sheffield on this link - [Have Your Say Sheffield](#)

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Public involvement in decision making at Sheffield City Council

How to ask and present to public questions, statements & petitions

DRAFT

What is this for?

This is a short guide which summarises how you can get involved in democratic meetings in Sheffield, specifically Full Council, Policy Committees, Governance Committee and Audit and Standards Committee. We have recently worked with citizens to review and reform our approach and the guidance below sets out how anyone in Sheffield can ask and present public questions, statements and petitions in our meetings.

There is a different approach to public questions in Local Area Committee meetings – for more information about this, see the petitions guide [here](#).

If you want more information or advice and support, please contact committees@sheffield.gov.uk

Purpose of public questions

“The citizens of Sheffield have a right to participate in the meetings of Sheffield City Council, our Committees and other Council bodies.

“Public Questions are one of the means of holding the Council to account, of getting items on public record, to raise public attention to an opportunity or issue. We welcome and want to encourage and enable greater citizen involvement in our city’s democracy and are committed to ensuring that any citizen can raise a public question (or petition) and should expect an accurate and timely response that answers the question or issue raised.

“Public questions are one way in which citizens can engage. They are a mechanism for respectfully engaging in the remit or agenda of a meeting, not a mechanism for engaging in detail or individual complaints or issues, they are not intended for engaging in debate or conversation.”

Overall approach to public questions, statements and petitions

- Maximum of two participations per person in any council meeting (i.e. Full Council, Policy Committees. Governance Committee or Audit and Standards Committee). For example:
 - 1 question or set of linked questions (max 200 words in total) & 1 agenda-related question (max 200 words) OR
 - 1 statement (max 200 words) and 1 agenda-related question (max 200 words)

- The 200 word limit for written questions, supplementary questions and verbal questions is intended to enable a person to ask a question and any related sub-questions as long as it is within the 200 word limit
 - A written question may have 4 parts and that will be considered as 1 question as long as it is within the 200 word limit.
- The 200 word limit will also apply to supplementary questions
- Chair will try and order questions in an appropriate way to bring balance and fairness and to provide parity to the issues and voices heard at our meetings.
- Petitions will continue to be treated separately to public questions, but within the same time allocation on the agenda.

Improving accessibility

We want to make it as easy as possible for everyone to get involved in our democratic meetings. But, we know that physically attending a committee meeting at a specific time of day can be difficult if you are at work, school, or if you have caring responsibilities. It can also be physically difficult if you have a disability. And for some people asking a question in front of lots of other people can be an intimidating thing to do.

So, we have listened and made a number of changes to make public questions, statements and presenting petitions more accessible. This includes:

- **Virtual questions and statements** – you can ask verbal questions and make statements remotely (via Teams or equivalent)
- **Having your question or statement read out for you** – you can request for a verbal question or statement be made on your behalf (eg. a nominated person or by an officer)
- **Written questions** – you can submit a written question and receive a written response without having to attend a meeting at all.
- You will also still be able to attend a Council meeting in person, as you can now.

Full Council

Who attends?	84 Councillors and statutory officers
What is the meeting for?	<p>Sets the overall direction of the Council.</p> <p>Some important decisions can only be taken at Full Council, such as setting the Council's budget and deciding the Council's overall policies.</p> <p>The Council appoints the Leader and at its Annual Meeting in May appoints Councillors to serve on its Committees. It also appoints representatives to serve on joint bodies and external organisations.</p>
How often are they?	Six meetings a year plus Budget Council (March) and AGM (May), usually on a Wednesday afternoon.
How can I watch it?	<p>In person - the Public Gallery in the Town Hall Council Chamber can accommodate 50 persons. An overspill area will be provided in the event that more than 50 members of the public attend – the webcast of the meeting will be live streamed to that room</p> <p>Public-i - https://sheffield.public-i.tv/core/portal/home</p>

	Details	Deadlines	What happens at the meeting	What happens after the meetings
Written questions relating to the remit of Full Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On any issue for which the Council has responsibility or is relevant to the city Limit of 200 words – including questions with multiple parts Questioners able to notify of intention to ask one supplementary question (max 200 words) after 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12 noon, six clear working days before the scheduled Full Council meeting (usually this will be the Monday of the week before the meeting) Written question responses will be 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 60mins allocated for questions, statements and petitions Written questions and answers will not be read out in the meeting as they are published online If time allows, supplementary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Written responses to any supplementary questions provided and published within 10 working days.

	Details	Deadlines	What happens at the meeting	What happens after the meetings
	<p>reading published response to a written question</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum of two participations per person in any council meeting (ie. Full Council or Policy Committees) 	<p>published 2 days before the meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supplementary questions (max 200 words) must be submitted in writing by 12 noon on the day before the meeting. 	<p>questions may be asked verbally. No commitment to respond but relevant Policy Committee chair) reserves the right of reply.</p>	
<p>Questions relating to the agenda of Full Council</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On issues relating to the published agenda for a specific Full Council meeting. • Agenda published 5 working days before a meeting. • 200 word limit – a question and any related sub-questions within a 200 word limit • Maximum of two participations per person in any council meeting (ie. Full Council or Policy Committees) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 noon, 3 days before a meeting - deadline for questions relating to the agenda / that couldn't be known at the point of deadline for written questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60mins allocated for questions, statements and petitions. • Verbal questions may be asked (in person / on screen) and responses provided by relevant Policy Committee Chair (or to be provided in writing if not possible by the meeting). • Verbal questions are asked at the discretion of Lord Mayor who will seek to ensure a fair representation of voices and issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses to any verbal questions that were not asked in Full Council due to time constraints provided in writing and published within 10 working days.

	Details	Deadlines	What happens at the meeting	What happens after the meetings
			within the allocated 30mins.	
Statements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statements can be made on any issue within the remit of Full Council or in specific reference to agenda items • Maximum of 1 statement per meeting, per person • Maximum of 200 words / 60-90 seconds of speaking time • Maximum of two participations per person in any council meeting (ie. Full Council or Policy Committees) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 noon, 6 days for statements relevant to the remit of Full Council • 12 noon, 3 days for statements relating to the published agenda of Full Council • All statements published online the day before the Full Council meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60mins allocated for questions, statements and petitions • Maximum of 90 seconds of speaking time per person • Statements are presented at the discretion of Lord Mayor who will seek to ensure a fair representation of voices and issues within the allocated 60mins. • No commitment to responding to a statement however, the Lord Mayor or relevant Policy Committee Chair will reserve the right of reply in the meeting if deemed appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Petitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We welcome online and paper petitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A petition can be submitted to the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ordinary Petitions: The petition organiser 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can read our petition logs to look at

	Details	Deadlines	What happens at the meeting	What happens after the meetings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Petitions can be organised or signed by anyone who lives, works or studies in Sheffield. • There must be at least 5 signatures for a petition to be valid. • There is a petitions scheme which provides a more detailed guide to submitting a petition • You can also start an e-petition through the council's website 	<p>Council, Policy Committees or Sub-Committees, Regulatory Committees and Area Committees.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ordinary Petitions: Advance notice by 9am at least 2 working days before the date of the meeting. • For petitions that trigger a debate at Full Council, we require seven working days' notice to be given prior to a Council meeting 	<p>will be given three minutes to present the petition at the meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillors will decide how to respond to the petition. • Debate Petitions: If a petition contains 5000 signatures or more, it will trigger a debate by the Full Council, in public, unless it is a petition asking for a senior Council officer to give evidence at one of the Policy Committees. 	<p>past petitions and what action we took in response.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The petitions scheme sets out how the Council might respond to the petition.

Policy Committees

Who attends?	Elected Councillors proportionate to the overall make-up of the Council. Most Policy Committees currently have 9 Members. Strategy and Resources has 13.
What is the meeting for?	Policy Committees are responsible for developing policy, scrutinising and reviewing performance, and making decisions aligned to their remit. Policy Committees responsibilities are set by Full Council
How often are they?	Every 2 months
How can I watch it?	In person – our Policy Committees are all physical meetings and are open to the public. Meetings are normally held at Sheffield Town Hall All Policy Committee meetings are also live webcast via Public-I - https://sheffield.public-i.tv/core/portal/home

	Details	Deadlines	What happens at the meeting	What happens after the meetings
Written questions relating to the remit of the Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On any issue for which the Policy Committee has responsibility Limit of 200 words – including questions with multiple parts Questioners able to notify of intention to ask one supplementary question (max 200 words) after reading published response Maximum of two participations per person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12 noon, six clear working days before the scheduled Committee meeting Written question responses will be published 2 days before the meeting Supplementary questions (max 200 words) must be submitted in writing by 12 noon on the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30mins allocated for questions, statements and petitions Written questions will not be read out in the meeting as they are published online If time allows, supplementary questions may be asked verbally. No commitment to respond but relevant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Written responses to any supplementary questions provided and published within 10 working days.

	Details	Deadlines	What happens at the meeting	What happens after the meetings
	in any council meeting (ie. Full Council or Policy Committees)	day before the meeting.	Policy Committee chair) reserves the right of reply.	
Questions relating to the agenda of the Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On issues relating to the published agenda for a specific Policy Committee meeting. • Agenda published 5 working days before a meeting • 200 word limit – a question and any related sub-questions within a 200 word limit • Maximum of two participations per person in any council meeting (ie. Full Council or Policy Committees) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 noon, 3 days before a meeting - deadline for questions relating to the agenda / that couldn't be known at the point of deadline for written questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30mins allocated for questions, statements and petitions • Verbal questions may be asked (in person / on screen) and responses provided by the Policy Committee Chair (or to be provided in writing if not possible by the meeting). • Verbal questions are asked at the discretion of Chair who will seek to ensure a fair representation of voices and issues within the allocated 30mins. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses to any verbal questions that were not asked in Committee due to time constraints k
Statements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statements can be made on any issue within the remit of Policy Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 noon, 6 days for statements relevant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30mins allocated for questions, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

	Details	Deadlines	What happens at the meeting	What happens after the meetings
	<p>or in specific reference to agenda items</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum of 1 statement per meeting, per person • Maximum of 200 words / 60-90 seconds of speaking time • Maximum of two participations per person in any council meeting (ie. Full Council or Policy Committees) 	<p>to the remit of the Policy Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 noon, 3 days for statements relating to the published agenda of Policy Committee • All statements published online the day before the Policy Committee meeting 	<p>statements and petitions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60-90 seconds of speaking time per person • Statements are presented at the discretion of the Chair who will seek to ensure a fair representation of voices and issues within the allocated 30mins. • No commitment to responding to a statement however, Policy Committee Chair will reserve the right of reply in the meeting if deemed appropriate. 	
Petitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We welcome online and paper petitions • Petitions can be organised or signed by 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A petition can be submitted to the Council, Policy Committees or Sub-Committees, Regulatory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ordinary Petitions: The petition organiser will be given three minutes to present the petition at the meeting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can read our petition logs to look at past petitions and what action we took in response.

	Details	Deadlines	What happens at the meeting	What happens after the meetings
	<p>anyone who lives, works or studies in Sheffield.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There must be at least 5 signatures for a petition to be valid. • There is a petitions scheme which provides a more detailed guide to submitting a petition • You can also start an e-petition through the council's website 	<p>Committees and Area Committees.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ordinary Petitions: Advance notice by 9am at least 2 working days before the date of the meeting. • For petitions that trigger a debate at Full Council, we require seven working days' notice to be given prior to a Council meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillors will decide how to respond to the petition. • Debate Petitions: If a petition contains 5000 signatures or more, it will trigger a debate by the Full Council, in public, unless it is a petition asking for a senior Council officer to give evidence at one of the Policy Committees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The petitions scheme sets out how the Council might respond to the petition.



Report to Governance Committee

27th March 2024

Report of: Head of Policy and Partnerships

Subject: Committee Work Programme

Author of Report: Alice Nicholson, Policy & Improvement Officer

Summary:

Please note this is the last meeting of Governance Committee in current municipal year, any future work programme will be for the Committee when appointed 2024/2025.

A Committee's work programme aims to show all known, substantive agenda items for forthcoming meetings of the Committee, to enable this committee, other committees, officers, partners and the public to plan their work with and for the Committee.

The Work Programme will remain a live document and will be brought to each Committee meeting.

For information a Committee Work Programme is attached at Appendix 1.

Recommendations:

1. Note the Committee's work programme, as set out in Appendix 1, progress on activity this municipal year, and forward work for Governance Committee.
2. Consider any further issues to be explored by officers for inclusion on the future iteration of the work programme for new municipal year.

Background Papers: None

Category of Report: Open

COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Update on the Committee workplan for Governance Committee

1. At previous Governance Committees, Members discussed the Committee's draft workplan. As part of the discussion, Members agreed there are items which will need and benefit from longer-term activity, these included public questions, community involvement, and review of Committee remits, these remain as ongoing work for the Committee. There are five items subject to confirmation as to when they can be considered for timetabling in new municipal year.
2. The Governance Committee's work is an essential part of the Council's commitment to continuously improve our committee system and how we work within it as Members, officers and with citizens and partners. However, there are significant constraints on Member and officer capacity and therefore, prioritising the items on the workplan to focus on the things Members most want to achieve in the municipal year is essential.
3. However, the Governance Committee's workplan contains a mix of items. Some are relatively self-contained (eg. with a paper outlining options and officer recommendations for the Committee to discuss and agree in one meeting) while others need much deeper development work with Member, citizen and officer time.
4. It is recommended Members note the Committee's work programme, progress on activity this municipal year and forward work, and consider any further issues to be explored by officers for inclusion on a future iteration of the work programme for new municipal year.

References from Council or other Committees

2.1 Any references sent to this Committee by Council, including any public questions, petitions and motions, or other committees since the last meeting are listed here, with commentary and a proposed course of action, as appropriate:

Issue	N/A
Referred from	
<i>Details</i>	
<i>Commentary/ Action Proposed</i>	

Member engagement, learning and policy development outside of Committee

3.1 Subject to the capacity and availability of councillors and officers, there are a range of ways in which Members can explore subjects, monitor information and develop their ideas about forthcoming decisions outside of formal meetings.

Appendix 2 is an example 'menu' of some of the ways this could be done. It is entirely appropriate that member development, exploration and policy development should in many cases take place in a private setting, to allow members to learn and formulate a position in a neutral space before bringing the issue into the public domain at a formal meeting.

2.2 Training & Skills Development - Induction programme for this committee.

Title	Description & Format	Date
N/A		

Appendix 1 – Work Programme

Part 1: Proposed additions and amendments to the work programme since the last meeting:

Item	Proposed Date	Note	Suggested approach
Governance Review Implementation Plan	Standing Item	To update the Committee on progress against actions in the Governance Review Implementation Plan and identify further actions for inclusion. (LB)	Progress update when required
Member Development Programme	20 th July 23 Ongoing	Member Development Working Group to oversee member development activity and the Member Development Strategy 2021-2025, including skills and priorities for learning and development and the inclusion of learning from recent reviews, such as the LGA Peer Challenge and the Race Equality Commission Report. (JD)	Member Development Working Group established July 2023. Committee updated 12 th Oct 2023. Further updates and involvement of the Governance Committee, as appropriate.
Public Questions Task and Finish Group	20 th July 23 Reporting stage	Agreed a task and finish group of Governance Committee to work on public questions, as per the Governance Review recommendation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensuring the process for citizens to ask public questions is clear, that public questions are triaged in a way that directs them to the most appropriate forum and that those forums are easy to access. Considering processes for responding to public questions, ensuring a consistent approach that is fit for purpose in the Committee System. 	Report of task and finish group final recommendations 27 th March 2024
NHS governance and alignment with our committee system	12 th October 2023 Reported	Governance Committee sponsored a task and finish group, reporting of recommendations from task and finish group to this meeting – 28.02.2024	Report of recommendations 28 th February 2024

<p>Citizen Participation and Community Involvement (Public Involvement Working Group)</p>	<p>December 2023 Ongoing</p>	<p>Governance Committee lead, connecting to other Policy Committees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focused on the findings and recommendations in the Involve report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Developing an ambitious vision for public involvement at SCC – Driving quality and practice improvement • A Member/community working group: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Elected Members from across political groups and Policy Committees – Involvement from stakeholders and partners in the city – identification of who underway – Commission activity and external expertise 	<p>A long-term project.</p> <p>Working group update - elected Membership agreed, scoping of stakeholders and partners for involvement underway. Working Group meet, March 2024 - update and next steps session</p>
<p>Review of Policy Committee Remits</p>	<p>December 2023 Ongoing</p>	<p>Governance Committee agreed to establish a new task and finish group which will start meeting in January 2024 lead the review over the course of 2024.</p> <p>Suggested key lines of enquiry for the review include the balance of decision making between LACs and policy committees and the relationships between LACs and policy committees</p>	<p>Initial scoping meet with members of Committee.</p> <p>March 2024 - next step meet to refine the scope and, prioritisation of elements in scope.</p>
<p>Urgent Decisions</p>	<p>TBC in 2024/2025</p>	<p>To review the use of urgent decisions to date, understand whether the process is working as intended, and whether changes are required</p>	<p>Policy review work – officer research to be presented to Committee</p>
<p>Charity Sub Committee and SCC role as a charitable trustee.</p>	<p>TBC in 2024/2025</p>	<p>To consider, and recommend to Full Council, the most appropriate way for the Council to discharge its role as Charitable Trustee</p>	<p>Part of larger piece of work to be reported late 2024.</p>

Measuring the health of the Committee System	TBC in 2024/2025	To develop and agree a performance framework and set of metrics to enable us to measure progress as the Committee System develops.	Should be developed and designed with citizens, officers and Members. Small number of workshops.
Changes to delegations	TBC in 2024/2025	To consider, and recommend to Full Council, changes to delegations (including grants – initially discussed by the Committee in December 2022).	
Officer support and engagement in Policy Committees	TBC in 2024/2025	To be defined – need to work with Governance Committee Members and officers to agree scope and focus	

Part 2: List of other potential items not yet included in the work programme

Issues that have recently been identified by the Committee, its Chair or officers as potential items but have not yet been added to the proposed work programme. If a Councillor raises an idea in a meeting and the committee agrees under recommendation 3 that this should be explored, it will appear either in the work programme or in this section of the report at the committee's next meeting, at the discretion of the Chair.

Topic	
Description	
Lead Officer/s	
Item suggested by	<i>Officer, Member, Committee, partners, public question, petition etc</i>
Type of item	<i>Referral to decision-maker/Pre-decision (policy development/Post-decision (service performance/ monitoring)</i>
Prior member engagement/ development required <i>(with reference to options in Appendix 2)</i>	
Public Participation/ Engagement approach <i>(with reference to toolkit in Appendix 3)</i>	

Lead Officer Commentary/Proposed Action(s)	
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Part 3: Agenda Items for Forthcoming Meetings

Meeting 8	27 th March 2024	Time				
Topic	Description	Lead Officer/s	Type of item <i>Decision/Referral to decision-maker/Pre-decision (policy development)/Post-decision (service performance/ monitoring)</i>	Prior member engagement/ development required <i>(with reference to options in Appendix 1)</i>	Public Participation/ Engagement approach <i>(with reference to toolkit in Appendix 2)</i>	Final decision-maker (& date) <i>This Cttee/Another Cttee (eg S&R)/Full Council/Officer</i>
Public Questions	Report of task and finish group findings and recommendation	Laurie Brennan / Alice Nicholson				
Standing items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Public Questions/ Petitions</i> • <i>Work Programme</i> 					

Appendix 2 – Menu of options for member engagement, learning and development prior to formal Committee consideration

Members should give early consideration to the degree of pre-work needed before an item appears on a formal agenda.

All agenda items will anyway be supported by the following:

- Discussion well in advance as part of the work programme item at Pre-agenda meetings. These take place in advance of each formal meeting, before the agenda is published and they consider the full work programme, not just the immediate forthcoming meeting. They include the Chair, Vice Chair and all Group Spokespersons from the committee, with officers
- Discussion and, where required, briefing by officers at pre-committee meetings in advance of each formal meeting, after the agenda is published. These include the Chair, Vice Chair and all Group Spokespersons from the committee, with officers.
- Work Programming items on each formal agenda, as part of an annual and ongoing work programming exercise
- Full officer report on a public agenda, with time for a public discussion in committee
- Officer meetings with Chair & VC as representatives of the committee, to consider addition to the draft work programme, and later to inform the overall development of the issue and report, for the committee's consideration.

The following are examples of some of the optional ways in which the committee may wish to ensure that they are sufficiently engaged and informed prior to taking a public decision on a matter. In all cases the presumption is that these will take place in private, however some meetings could happen in public or eg be reported to the public committee at a later date.

These options are presented in approximately ascending order of the amount of resources needed to deliver them. Members must prioritise carefully, in consultation with officers, which items require what degree of involvement and information in advance of committee meetings, in order that this can be delivered within the officer capacity available.

The majority of items cannot be subject to the more involved options on this list, for reasons of officer capacity.

- Written briefing for the committee or all members (email)
- All-member newsletter (email)
- Requests for information from specific outside bodies etc.
- All-committee briefings (private or, in exceptional cases, in-committee)
- All-member briefing (virtual meeting)
- Facilitated policy development workshop (potential to invite external experts / public, see appendix 3)
- Site visits (including to services of the council)
- Task and Finish group (one at a time, one per cttee)

Furthermore, a range of public participation and engagement options are available to inform Councillors, see appendix 3.

Appendix 3 – Public engagement and participation toolkit

Public Engagement Toolkit

On 23 March 2022 Full Council agreed the following:

A toolkit to be developed for each committee to use when considering its 'menu of options' for ensuring the voice of the public has been central to their policy development work. Building on the developing advice from communities and Involve, committees should make sure they have a clear purpose for engagement; actively support diverse communities to engage; match methods to the audience and use a range of methods; build on what's worked and existing intelligence (SCC and elsewhere); and be very clear to participants on the impact that engagement will have.

The list below builds on the experiences of Scrutiny Committees and latterly the Transitional Committees and will continue to develop. The toolkit includes (but is not be limited to):

- a. Public calls for evidence
- b. Issue-focused workshops with attendees from multiple backgrounds (sometimes known as 'hackathons') led by committees
- c. Creative use of online engagement channels
- d. Working with VCF networks (eg including the Sheffield Equality Partnership) to seek views of communities
- e. Co-design events on specific challenges or to support policy development
- f. Citizens assembly style activities
- g. Stakeholder reference groups (standing or one-off)
- h. Committee / small group visits to services
- i. Formal and informal discussion groups
- j. Facilitated communities of interest around each committee (eg a mailing list of self-identified stakeholders and interested parties with regular information about forthcoming decisions and requests for contributions or volunteers for temporary co-option)
- k. Facility for medium-term or issue-by-issue co-option from outside the Council onto Committees or Task and Finish Groups. Co-optees of this sort at Policy Committees would be non-voting.

This public engagement toolkit is intended to be a quick 'how-to' guide for Members and officers to use when undertaking participatory activity through committees.

It will provide an overview of the options available, including the above list, and cover:

- How to focus on purpose and who we are trying to reach
- When to use and when not to use different methods
- How to plan well and be clear to citizens what impact their voice will have
- How to manage costs, timescales, scale.

There is an expectation that Members and Officers will be giving strong consideration to the public participation and engagement options for each item on a committee's work programme, with reference to the above list a-k

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