

## Co-Chairing – submission to Governance Committee Inquiry December 2021

**Report of:** The Director of Legal and Governance

**Date:** 17<sup>th</sup> November 2021

**Subject:** Job sharing for Committee Chairs

**Councillor leads:** Cllr Dawn Dale and Cllr Zahira Naz

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**Summary:** The report outlines Councillors' experience of job sharing committee chairmanship roles at Sheffield City Council and in other councils and **recommends:** that co-chairing should be facilitated and encouraged as a way of working in Sheffield City Council's future governance model.

### 1.0 Introduction

This year, one of the purposes of Transitional Committees is to pilot new ways of working for the new committee system. As a pilot of new ways of working, Councillor Dawn Dale and Councillor Zahira Naz are co-chairs of the 'Our Council' transitional committee. They are taking in turns to preside over the committee and are sharing other elements of the chair's workload.

As part of their pilot, Cllrs Dale and Naz have also spoken with:

- members who, for several years, have been co-chairs of Sheffield City Council's Licensing and Planning & Highways committees.
- Members from other councils who have job-shared.

### 2.0 What is co-chairing?

- Two members essentially fulfil one chairmanship position on a job-share basis.
- Typically, co-chairs each lead on separate specific areas of the committee's remit, each chairing either some whole meetings or the relevant parts of meetings
- There is only one formal Chair of a meeting at any one time. The other co-chair technically steps aside as either vice-chair or a regular committee member when their counterpart is in the Chair.
- Only whoever is formally the Chair at any one time has eg a casting vote.
- Outside of formal committee meetings, co-chairs each act as the first point of contact for their areas of the committee's business when working with council officers, residents, partners etc.
- Both members receive a special responsibility allowance, or a proportion of one, recognising the scale of the role they are undertaking and the associated time commitment.

As an example, Brighton and Hove's co-chairs have provided officers with a breakdown of areas covered by their committee indicating who is the first point of contact where guidance from the chair is required (see appendix 1).

### 3.0 Why have co-chairs?

The potential benefits of co-chairing were found to include:

- Making chairmanship (and leadership positions in general) potentially available to those councillors who would not otherwise be able to make the necessary time commitment for whatever reason;
- Ensuring that Sheffield City Council does not lose out on the leadership contribution of Chairs who are also carers, parents or in full-time education or work;
- Increasing the capacity and broadening the capability of the chairs of SCC's committees; recognising the likely workload of these positions;
- Creating opportunities for a more representative sample of councillors to take leadership roles, for example facilitating a gender balance.

### 4.0 How do others do it?

To explore the ways in which co-chairing would work best at Sheffield City Council we gathered information from Brighton and Hove and Lambeth Councils, including interviews with councillors from these authorities.

#### 4.1 Brighton & Hove

When meeting with Brighton and Hove we spoke to Councillor Siriol Hugh-Jones and Councillor David Gibson who are co-chairs of the Housing Committee. We asked a series of questions to gain an insight into how the co-chairing works, including why the job share was established, what the benefits are, what was needed to make it work well, how the workload was divided fairly, what the effects were on the vice-chair and how the voting system worked.

Brighton and Hove operate a committee system and they produced a draft Chair Job Share Protocol [Item 34 Appendix 4 job share protocol.pdf \(brighton-hove.gov.uk\)](#). The protocols describe two ways in which meetings can be chaired – alternate or six month rotations and also who should be the first point of contact for particular areas covered by their committees, though it is advised that the other should be copied into emails and both may attend briefings.

#### 4.2 Lambeth

Lambeth council have had job-share Cabinet posts since 2016. This was initially explained only in terms of Members Allowances, stating the following:

“Where Cabinet Member posts are listed as ‘job share’ these appointments will each be on a 6 monthly consecutive basis during which period they will have decision making powers. The first appointment to run from 13th April 2016 until 12th September and the second appointment to run from 13th September to the next AGM currently scheduled for 19th April 2017. Each will receive a Cabinet Member SRA on a pro-rata basis.”

Job sharing amongst Cabinet members is more complex as the number of members is limited by statute. A protocol was presented to the Lambeth Annual meeting this explaining how this is managed at Lambeth, [7a. Managing Job Share Cabinet Portfolios.pdf \(lambeth.gov.uk\)](#).

At Lambeth, while responsibilities may be shared and both job-sharers may attend Cabinet Member briefings, only one is the formal decision maker (and voting member of a decision-making Cabinet) at any time – this is done on a six-month rotation.

#### 4.3 Conclusions from other authorities

At both councils, the job-sharers need to arrange between themselves how their responsibilities are to be shared (so neither is doing a full-time post for half the Special Responsibility Allowance) and make sure that other members and officers are informed about the arrangements. This is important for clarity and certainty.

However, it is a matter for an Independent Remuneration Panel to consider the workloads of co-chairs and make recommendations on their remuneration. For example, it may be that in a new system, the roles of Chairs could be designed to be more time consuming than one person could manage, meaning that each co-chair is doing more than half of a role. The posts could also be combined with Vice Chairmanships.

Brighton and Hove introduced member job share in July/August 2020. So far it is thought to have worked well and members have been able to work more productively across their portfolios, being able to focus on key areas with more precision.

Despite some initial resistance by officers the co-chairing has worked well, and officers are supportive. Special Responsibility Allowance has been split and the clear list of responsibilities and case load division has been conducive for job share to work smoothly. It was also expressed that as co-chairs less criticism is received, and this builds confidence and resilience. It is worth noting that the current leadership of Brighton and Hove is also a job share.

It is too early to report in detail on the experiences of the Transitional Committee co-chairs, but reports from the existing co-chairs of eg SCC's licencing committee are that the system can work perfectly well.

#### **5.0 Issues which still need exploring**

There are further questions which it would be useful to answer before a job share is established at Sheffield City Council, including:

- Is the role, and the way you need to do it, different depending on the reasons why a job share is necessary? If so, how should this be reflected in a protocol?
- How best to divide responsibility in terms of subject matter, theme, pieces of work etc in each specific subject area?

#### **6.0 Recommendations**

- *Build the opportunity for job shares into the Committee's plans when it recommends a governance structure to Council.*
- *Ensure that any job sharing arrangement is supported by a job-share protocol in or with the constitution, potentially modelled on Brighton and Hove's.*
- *Evaluate the effectiveness of any job shared roles within the first 12 months, alongside the evaluation of the effectiveness of the new governance model as a whole, and adjust the council's approach accordingly.*

## Appendix 1

Example of division of responsibility between co-chairs in a committee system (Brighton and Hove):

<b>Area</b>	<b>First point of contact</b>
Housing finance	Cllr Gibson
Rough sleeping	Cllr Gibson
Temporary and emergency housing	Cllr Gibson
Homeless Reduction Board	Cllr Gibson
Housing associations	Cllr Hugh-Jones
Homelessness prevention	Cllr Gibson
Housing supply	Cllr Gibson
Private rented sector	Cllr Gibson
Energy standards (EPCs)	Cllr Hugh-Jones
Housing services	Cllr Hugh-Jones
Council tenants and leaseholders	Cllr Hugh-Jones
Repairs and major works	Cllr Hugh-Jones
Area panels	Cllr Hugh-Jones
Estate regeneration	Cllr Gibson
Community-led housing	Cllr Hugh-Jones
Low carbon, fabric efficient housing	Cllr Hugh-Jones
Senior housing	Cllr Hugh-Jones
Housing KPIs	Cllr Hugh-Jones
Monitoring deliver of the work programme	Cllr Gibson