Sheffield's new Committee System

2022-03

What is changing about…

1. …who will be making decisions about Sheffield?
2. …how decisions will be made in Sheffield?

Centre for Governance and Scrutiny

Sheffield City Council

The context

- In May 2021 a **public referendum** voted to change the Council's governance structure to a committee system in May 2022.
- **Local Area Committees created** at that same moment
- A **public inquiry** has been held to gather evidence and design the new committee system
- It is all about putting the **voice of residents** at the heart of decisions about Sheffield
- **The shape of the new committee system will keep changing long after May 2022**

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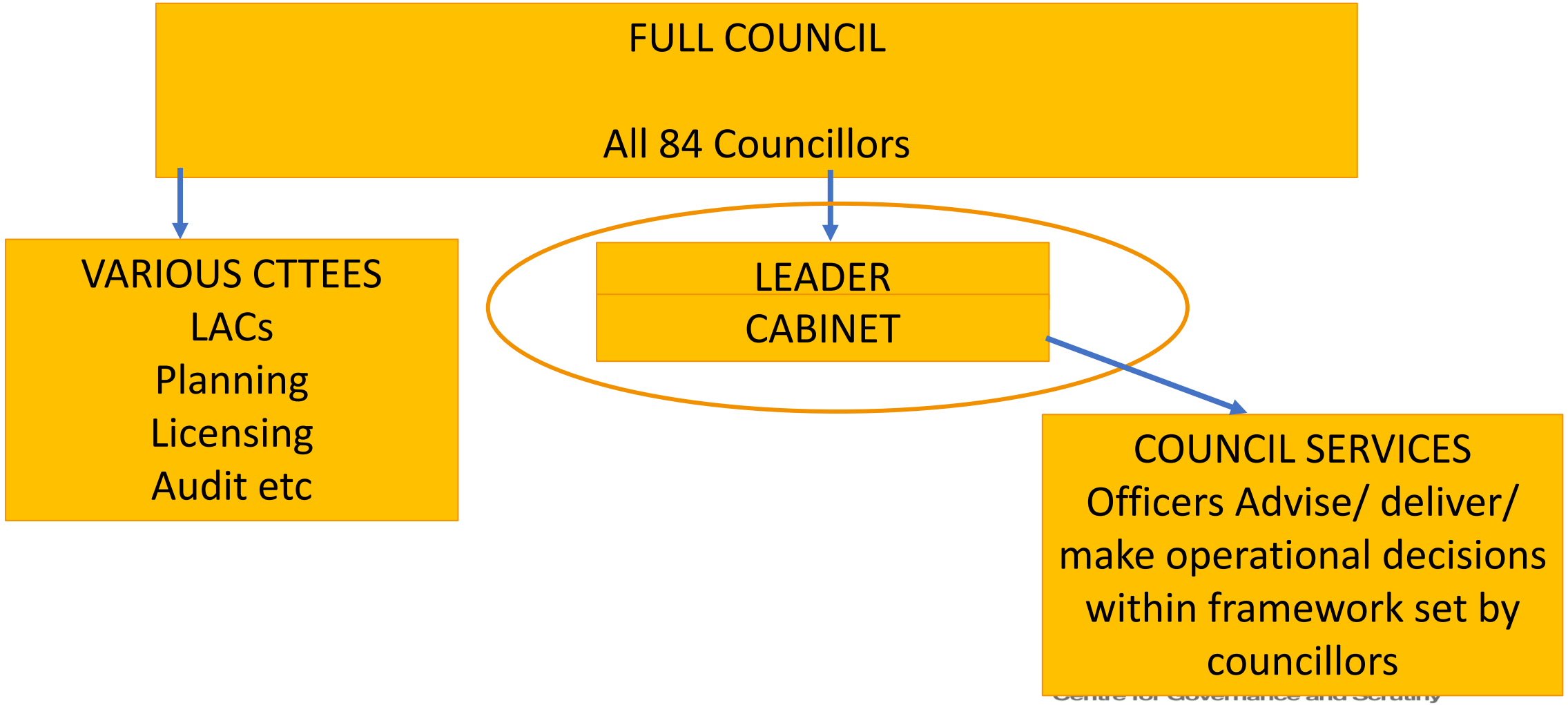
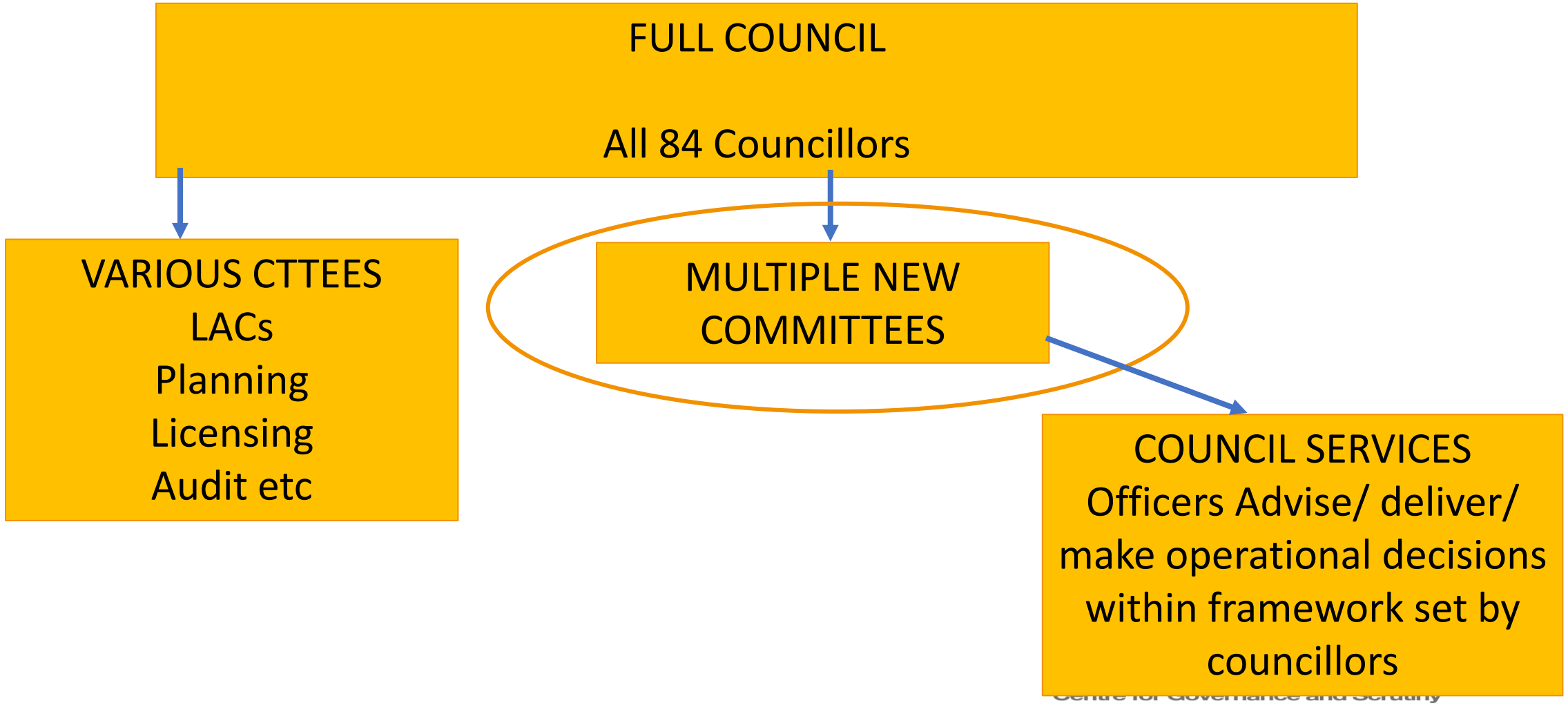
We're moving *from* this model…



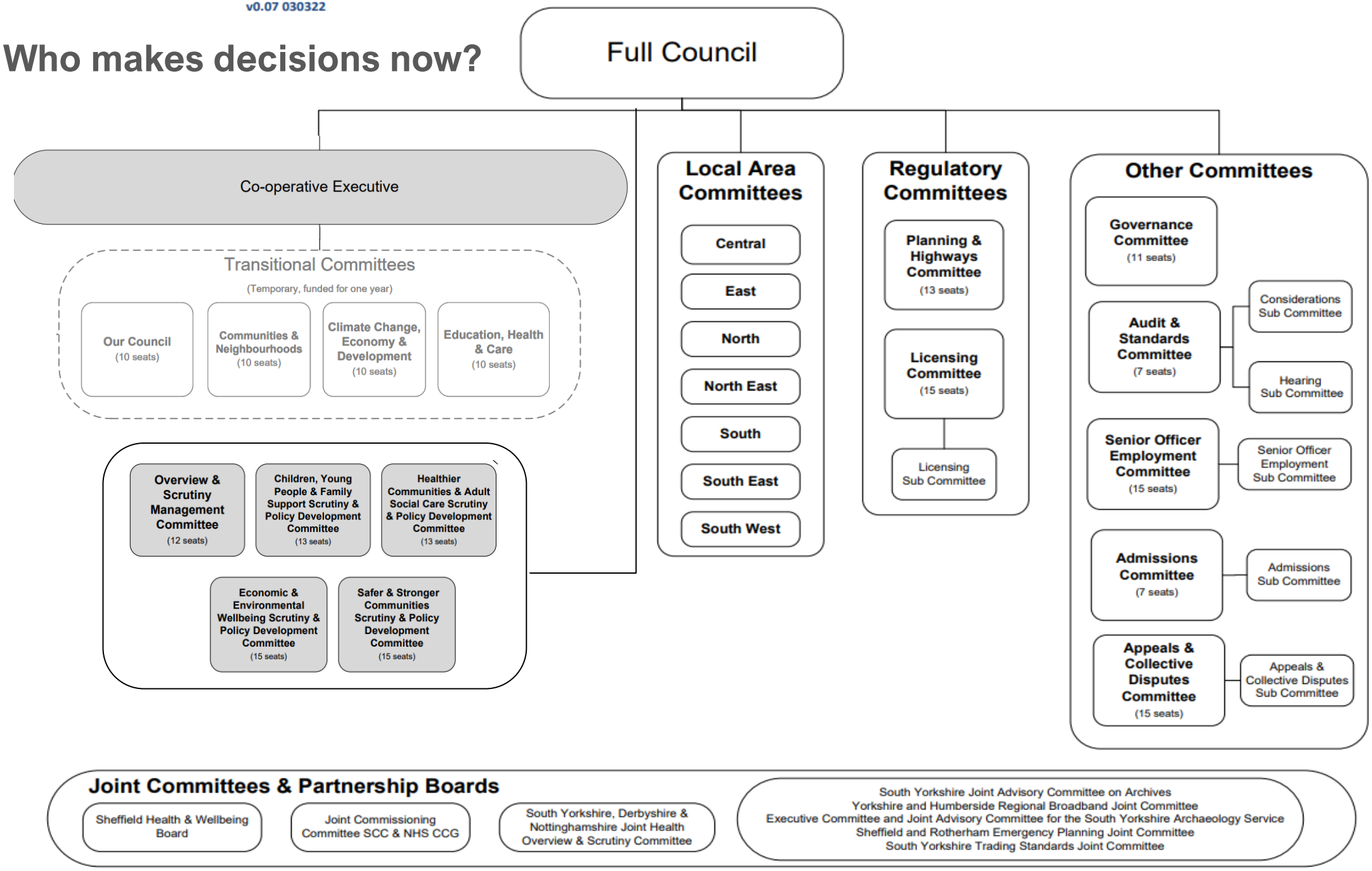
...to this model.



Proposed Governance Arrangements May 2022

v0.07 030322

Who makes decisions now?



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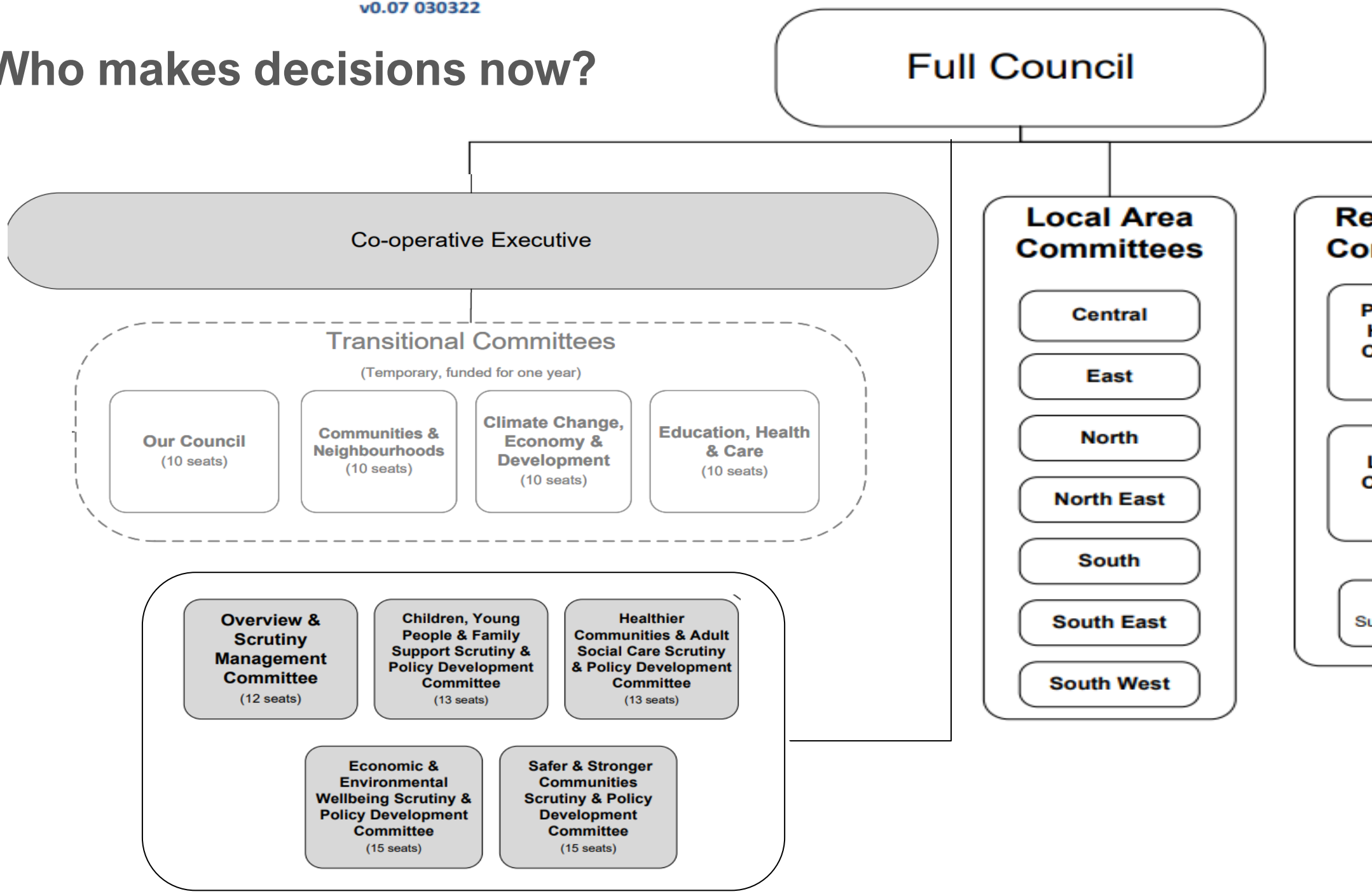
Who makes decisions now?



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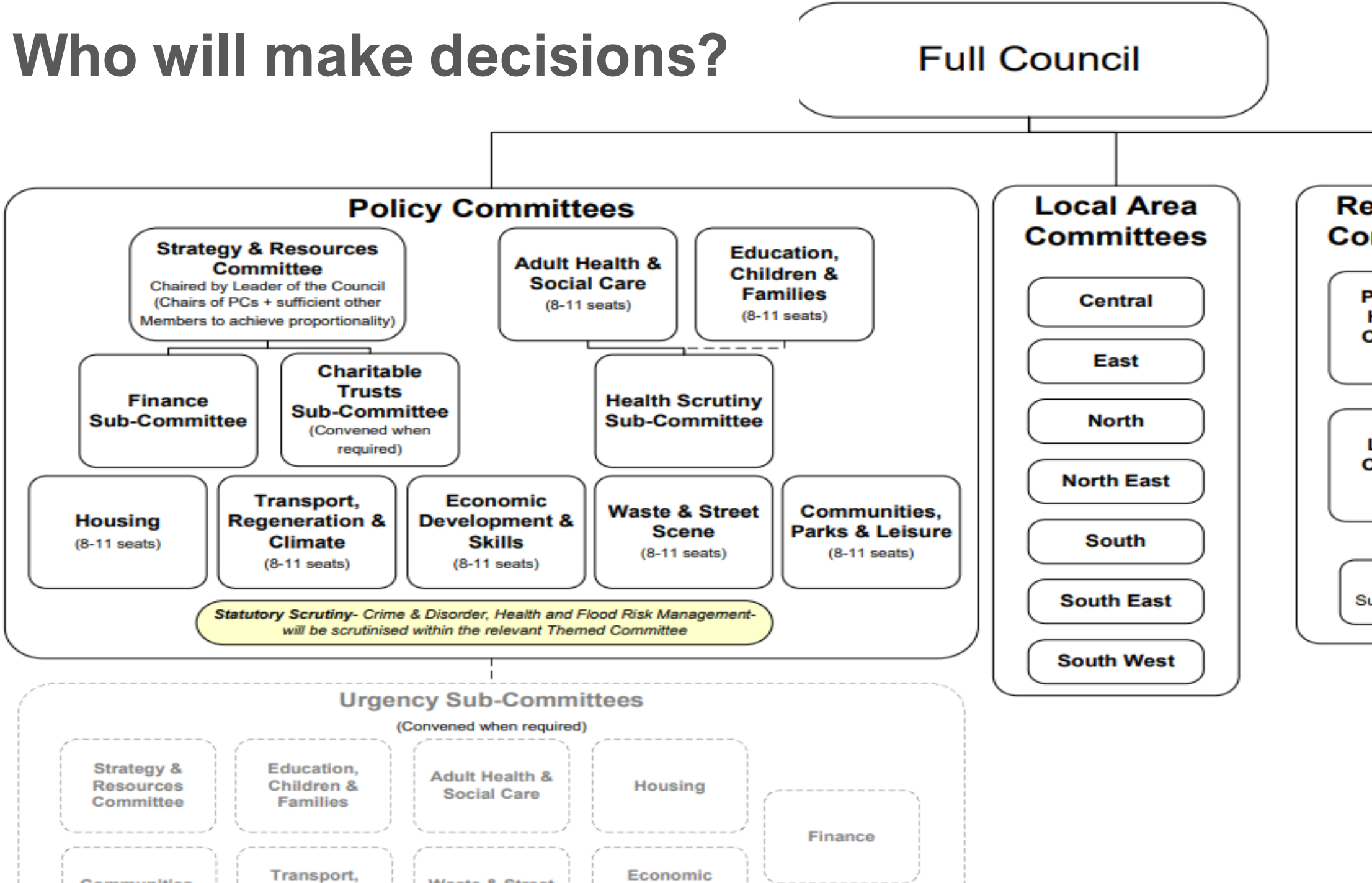
Who will make decisions?



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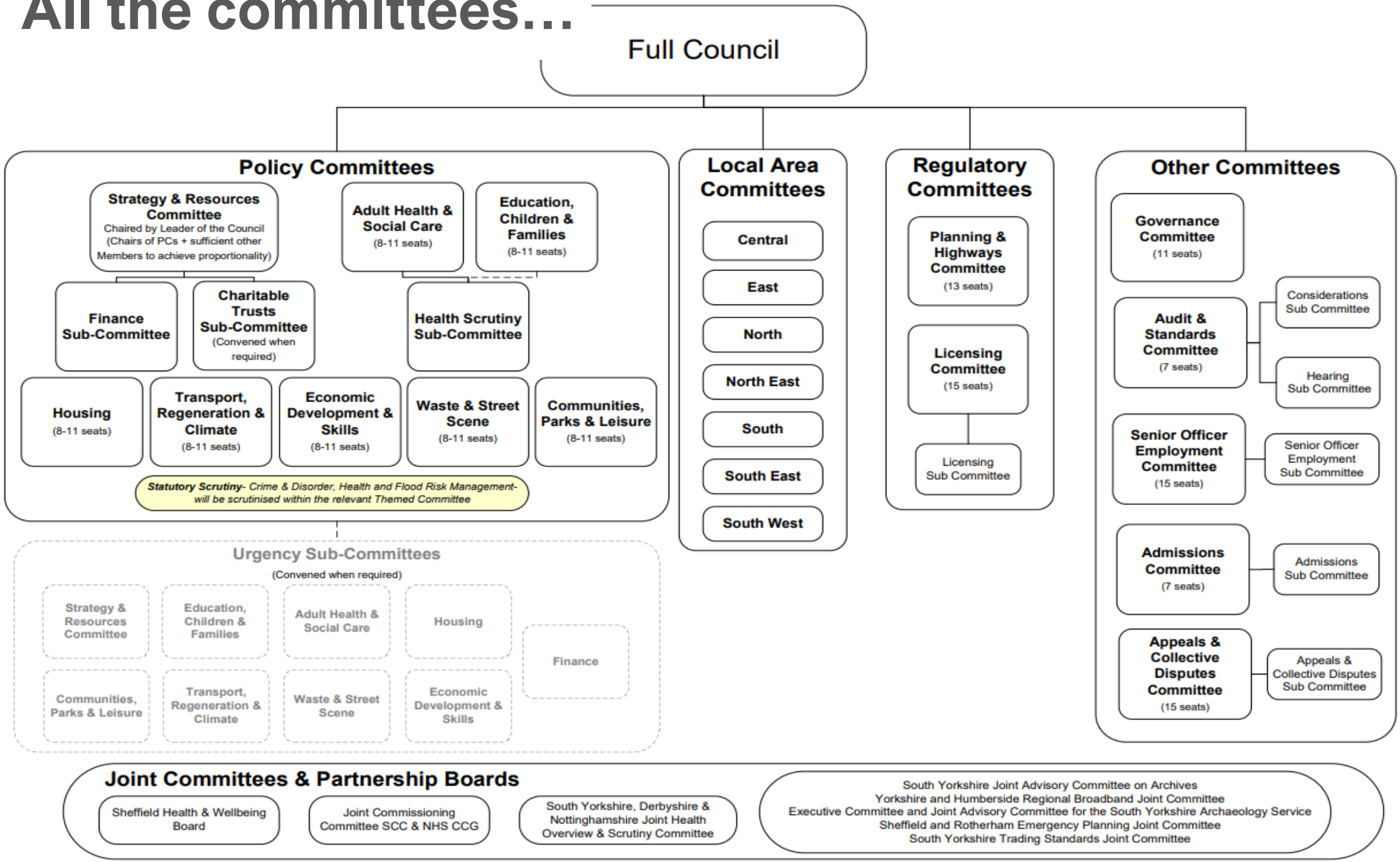
All the committees…



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What is changing about how will decisions be made?

In Local Area Committees:

- continue to develop as currently – the new committee system doesn't change the plans for ways of working locally
- LACs can refer issues to any and all policy committees (previously referred to cabinet)

In the new Policy Committees:

- Cross-party, politically proportionate setting, whole committee accountable
- All political groups involved in policy development
- Use of a new 'toolkit' of public engagement options
- More plans to improve the way the whole council involves the public, partners, stakeholders, communities in policy development and decisions

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Public Engagement ‘toolkit’

1. A toolkit 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.
    1. Public Questions and petitions – more access to decision-makers
    2. Public calls for evidence
    3. Issue-focused workshops with attendees from multiple backgrounds (sometimes known as ‘hackathons’) led by committees
    4. Creative use of online engagement channels
    5. Working with VCF networks (eg including the Sheffield Equality Partnership) to seek views of communities
    6. Co-design events on specific challenges or to support policy development
    7. Citizens assembly style activities
    8. Stakeholder reference groups (standing or one-off)
    9. Committee / small group visits to services
    10. Formal and informal discussion groups
    11. 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)
    12. 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.

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Looking further ahead – public engagement plans

- **Purpose** – have a clear purpose for engaging Sheffielders. Be honest about the rationale for engagement, and what influence Sheffielders can expect to have on the outcome
- **Who engages** – actively support Sheffield's diverse communities to engage, particularly those who are underrepresented, underserved or who are facing disadvantages; and engage with the VCS prior to commencing engagement activities to better understand the context, what is needed and to reach underrepresented groups
- **How** – match the approach(es) to your audiences, using a diversity of methods and don't just focus on information extraction (ie. Co-design, co-creation etc)
- **Embed engagement in all we do** – with clear, shared principles, creative approaches and at all levels in the city (neighbourhood and city level)
- **Ensure there is demonstrable impact** – involving people before decisions are made and evidence how participation has impacted on a decision
- **Support and resource** – support under-resourced and ccessibled) communities to take part and contribute to decisions and invest in training and development (Members, officers).
- **Foster collaboration** – develop a culture where Sheffielders, public services and community organisations collaborate on local issues

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