

# Sheffield's Committee System

shaping the scope and approach to the six month review

## Approach to today's meeting

Building on the initial Governance Committee paper in June 2022:

1. Consider the scope of the six month review –
  - what we need to focus on; and
  - how we undertake the review
2. Agree how Governance Committee want to work through the review
3. Agree to launch the review at the next Governance Committee meeting (10<sup>th</sup> Nov).

# Our new Strategic Goals

## Fair, inclusive and empowered communities

Sheffielders contribute to and shape the issues that matter to them in their communities and their city.



## Strong and connected neighbourhoods which people are happy to call home

Sheffielders live in clean, vibrant and caring communities where people feel safe and are treated with respect. More people have access to good homes, reliable transport, and the key local amenities they need to live their day-to-day lives.



## Tackling inequalities and supporting people through the cost-of-living crisis

Sheffielders live in a city where inequality and discrimination are actively challenged, respect and diversity are valued and we strive to make our economy and our city work better for everyone.



## Happy young people who have the start they need for the future they want

Young Sheffielders are happy, safe and have the opportunities they need to be fulfilled and reach their potential in a changing world.



## Healthy lives and wellbeing for all

Sheffielders all have the opportunity to lead long, healthy, active and happy lives and can connect to the right health and wellbeing support at the right time.



## Clean economic growth

Sheffield seizes on the opportunity for clean, sustainable and inclusive growth and supports an innovative and creative city economy with thriving businesses and good jobs.



## A good council

As an employer and leader in the city, we need to aspire to be an outstanding organisation; a council that all Elected Members, staff and citizens can be proud of.

## High quality services for all

Sheffielders in every part of the city can access consistently high-quality council services when and where they need them.

The Chairs of our Policy Committees (through Strategy & Resources Committee) have set out six strategic goals which demonstrate our ambitions for this city and its people.

These are underpinned by our primary goals to be a **good council** and **ensure high quality services for all** – because we want and need our organisation to be in the best possible position to deliver for the Sheffielders

## Background to the six month review

As part of the change to our governance arrangements, in February 2022 Full Council agreed that:

“The Governance Committee shall conduct a review of the effectiveness of the new system, commencing six months after implementation (November 2022) with a view to provide Full Council with insight into what has worked well and alongside any recommendations. This review will:

- Take account of any changes to the local and national context
- Include the previously agreed ‘strategic aims’ and ‘design principles’ in its assessment criteria
- Actively seek and use feedback from residents, stakeholders, councillors, and officers to inform its judgements against those criteria”

This commitment was reaffirmed by the Governance Committee in June 22, when it started planning for the review, and identifying issues that would need consideration through the review.

## Outline approach – what Governance Committee agreed (June 22)

**In June the Governance Committee agreed that it would take a whole-committee enquiry approach, with the purpose of:**

1. Considering how the transitional and initial period of the committee system has “enabled the Council to begin to work within a system where all **parties**’ views are taken into consideration when making decisions or setting policy for the Council...” as was originally intended.
2. Looking to review how well community participation, liaison with other organisations and analysis of policy is undertaken.
3. Considering how the new governance arrangements interact with any changes to the local and national landscape.

## Focus and scope – what we’re looking at and what we aren’t and why

The focus is on the initial function of the committee system since the transition and implementation in May 2022. We now need to scope this out in more detail to provide key lines of enquiry for the review.

But we also need to frame the parameters of what we **are not** going to do in the six month review:

- 1) Whole system redesign** – we are not repeating or rerunning the wholesale design of Sheffield’s committee system. This is about continuous improvement, using collective insight and experience of how the governance model has worked to date to make it better for citizens, Members and officers.
- 2) Full Council** – the review should consider the constitutional and governance role that Full Council plays in our Committee System. However, the review will not look at how Full Council meetings operate as this is subject to a separate review involving Members.
- 3) Local Area Committees** – the role and function of LACs will not be part of this review EXCEPT to consider the interaction between LACs and the city-level committees.
- 4) Electoral system and cycle** – whilst issues relating to the voting system (FPTP) and local frequency of elections was raised by stakeholders in the initial work on Sheffield’s committee system, these will not be considered as part of this review. Changes to the voting system are not within our powers as a local authority and choices around the electoral cycle will be considered by S&R Committee as part of the budget process.

**Q - Do Members feel this positioning is right for the six month review?**

How the transitional and initial period of the committee system has “enabled the Council to begin to work within a system where all parties’ views are taken into consideration when making decisions or setting policy for the Council...” as was originally intended



# Scope – how the Committee System is working

Suggested areas to focus on:

- **Overall structure**
  - Policy Committee areas of responsibility (any need clarifying, in the wrong place or identified as missing?)
  - Number of policy committees
  - Interplay with the regulatory committees
  - how we are managing complex, crosscutting policy issues
  - Relationship and interconnection with Local Area Committees
- **Committee working practice**
  - Experiences of citizens, Members and officers
  - Committee workloads and agendas (amount of content, focus)
  - Balance of decisions, policy development, review
  - Urgent Decision Making process and volume of urgent decisions (may link to delegations section)
  - Pre-meets and briefings (and consistency across committees)
  - Chairing and co-chairing arrangements
  - Involvement of group spokespeople and deputies
- **Capacity and resource (link to EIA)**
  - Impacts on Member capacity, workload and wellbeing
  - Officer capacity and cost – team around committee, professional support, wider service impacts
- **Decision making and delegations**
  - Effectiveness of scheme of delegations – is the balance right
  - Clarity of which decisions should be taken where ('route maps')
- **Constitution**
  - Legal and constitutional matters that need to be addressed and considered through the review

**Q – Are there things Members want to add? Should we do some pre-work with Members, officers and stakeholders to make sure we’re focusing on the key issues?**

Looking to review how well community participation, liaison with other organisations and analysis of policy is undertaken.

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## Scope – participation

### Suggested areas to focus on:

- **Citizen engagement in the work of committees**
  - practice to date (good and bad)
  - what activity is being carried out and planned by Committees
  - how stakeholders are being involved in Committee work (inc. as co-opted members; how the relationship between LACs and Committees is working.
- **Formal participation routes**
  - public questions, petitions
- **Equality, diversity and inclusion**
  - Accessibility of committee content and meetings (inc. location/venue)
  - Inclusion of citizen voice in decision making
- **Communication and information availability**
  - availability of open, accessible information about committee meetings
  - Accessibility of information about committee activity, decisions



## Scope 3 – local and national context

### Suggested areas to focus on:

- We need to consider the focus for this (if any)
- Could be:
  - Legislative changes / duties (limited)
  - Financial and political context

Considering how the new governance arrangements interact with any changes to the local and national landscape.

**Q – Are we clear what this means and what the focus is? Do Members feel this area is relevant or clear enough to retain?**

## Other areas to consider

### Timing of the review

- We have only had two rounds of committee meetings thus far and therefore, this review is taking place at a very early stage in the operation of our committee system model and new ways of working are still bedding in.
- However, this does ensure that we can address any issues now before they become long standing or normed in the new system and improve our practise across the system.

### Local political context

- We need to recognise that SCC is in no overall control with three political parties involved in the administration which may impact (positively and negatively) on the way our committee system works

### LGA Peer Challenge

- SCC is likely to have an LGA Corporate Peer Challenge in Autumn/Winter 2022 and the LGA Peer Team will want to look at how our committee system is operating as part of their work.
- Governance Committee may wish to consider if there are any particular areas they would like the LGA Peer Team to look at or give a view on which could then complement our six month review.

# We need to reflect on the Design Principles

## Top 5 Design Principles.....When it comes to the way it makes decisions, Sheffield City Council aims to...

1

...**be democratic**. Sheffield City Council is committed to local democracy

2

....**be open and trustworthy**. Make decisions publicly, so people can tell who is responsible for what

3

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

4

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

5

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

# How we undertake the review

## initial ideas

# How we are going to undertake the review

Once we have agreed the scope of the review (what and the why) we will need to work through how we undertake the work. Key things to consider here are:

## Who

Who do we want to talk with and hear from? This was set out in the paper to Governance Committee in June 2022, and included:

- Citizens & stakeholders
- Elected Members
- Officers
- Partners – including VCF organisations, anchor institutions, businesses and other councils
- Professional bodies – e.g. CfGS and the LGA

## Approach and methods

- 1) Desk research – analysis of any quantitative data available, call for evidence and
- 2) Facilitated discussions and conversations – including with Members, officers and dedicated sessions for citizens and stakeholders (in-person and virtual)
- 3) Evidence hearings – whole committee sessions

# Timescales

## **NOVEMBER 2022 to DECEMBER 2022**

10<sup>th</sup> Nov – Governance Committee agree final scope and launch review.

Review process, receiving and co-ordinating submissions of evidence from a variety of stakeholders including elected members, council officers, partner organisations and the general public.

## **JANUARY 2023**

Evidence hearings with the full committee (in public)

## **FEBRUARY 2023**

Governance Committee receives the final Post Implementation Review report

## **MARCH 2023**

Respond to the Post Implementation Review report with any proposed changes to the constitution and any alterations to the Benefits Outcome Framework

## **MAY 2023**

Any proposed changes to the constitution to be agreed at the AGM

## Recommendations for Governance Committee

- Discuss and comment on the proposed approach to the review with particular reference to:
  - the proposed structure and timing of the review
  - any further issues Committee Members would like to highlight for consideration through the review
- Agree to set up a working group of Governance Committee Members to meet regularly and support the ongoing progress of the review.
- Subject to the Committee's comments as per above; agree the approach to the review and commission officers to start putting the necessary arrangements for the pre-work and review in place.

# Appendix



## Design Principles. The new committee system.....

should not be over-complicated, or costly	should help Councillors from all parties to find the things they can agree on, and not let disagreements become blockages
should include Full Council meetings which are time well spent	should seek out and listen to all voices from across the city, valuing them equally
should make sure people in each part of the system know what's happening in the other parts, and that they all work together	should show how Councillors took people's views into account when they made each decision
should make it easy to know what decisions will be made, and when	should help the Council work well with others locally and nationally
should make it easy to know what decisions have been made and why (and what they mean)	should make it easier for people to find information about how the City works, and how they can get something done through the Council
should show the evidence for decisions, and what options were considered	should have high expectations of Councillors' behaviour
should make it clear who is allowed to decide what, and why they have that power.	should allow councillors to balance their time between local work, formal meetings and their own careers and families
should hold decision-makers to account	should include support and training for councillors
should allow urgent decisions to happen quickly, without having to compromise on the other things in this list	

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