

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council of the City of Sheffield held in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Pinstone Street, Sheffield, S1 2HH, on Wednesday 23 March 2022, at 2.00 pm, pursuant to notice duly given and Summonses duly served.

PRESENT

THE LORD MAYOR (Councillor Gail Smith)
THE DEPUTY LORD MAYOR (Councillor Sioned-Mair Richards)

1	<i>Beauchief & Greenhill Ward</i> Richard Shaw	10	<i>East Ecclesfield Ward</i> Vic Bowden Alan Woodcock	19	<i>Nether Edge & Sharrow Ward</i> Peter Garbutt Maroof Raouf Alison Teal
2	<i>Beighton Ward</i> Chris Rosling-Josephs	11	<i>Ecclesall Ward</i> Roger Davison Barbara Masters Shaffaq Mohammed	20	<i>Park & Arbourthorne</i> Ben Miskell Sophie Wilson
3	<i>Birley Ward</i> Denise Fox Bryan Lodge Karen McGowan	12	<i>Firth Park Ward</i> Fran Belbin Abdul Khayum Abtisam Mohamed	21	<i>Richmond Ward</i> David Barker Mike Drabble Dianne Hurst
4	<i>Broomhill & Sharrow Vale Ward</i> Angela Argenzio Brian Holmshaw Kaltum Rivers	13	<i>Fulwood Ward</i> Sue Alston Andrew Sangar Cliff Woodcraft	22	<i>Shiregreen & Brightside Ward</i> Peter Price Garry Weatherall
5	<i>Burngreave Ward</i> Talib Hussain Mark Jones Safiya Saeed	14	<i>Gleadless Valley Ward</i> Alexi Dimond Cate McDonald Paul Turpin	23	<i>Southey Ward</i> Mike Chaplin Tony Damms Jayne Dunn
6	<i>City Ward</i> Douglas Johnson	15	<i>Graves Park Ward</i> Ian Auckland Steve Ayriss	24	<i>Stannington Ward</i> Penny Baker Vickie Priestley
7	<i>Crookes & Crosspool Ward</i> Tim Huggan Mohammed Mahroof Ruth Milsom	16	<i>Hillsborough Ward</i> Christine Gilligan George Lindars-Hammond Josie Paszek	25	<i>Stocksbridge & Upper Don Ward</i> Lewis Chinchin Julie Grocutt
8	<i>Darnall Ward</i> Mazher Iqbal Mary Lea Zahira Naz	17	<i>Manor Castle Ward</i> Terry Fox Anne Murphy Sioned-Mair Richards	26	<i>Walkley Ward</i>
9	<i>Dore & Totley Ward</i> Martin Smith	18	<i>Mosborough Ward</i> Tony Downing Kevin Oxley Gail Smith	27	<i>West Ecclesfield Ward</i> Alan Hooper Mike Levery Ann Whitaker
				28	<i>Woodhouse Ward</i> Mick Rooney Jackie Satur

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sue Auckland, Simon Clement-Jones, Ben Curran, Dawn Dale, Neale Gibson, Francyne Johnson, Bernard Little, Bob McCann, Joe Otten, Ruth Mersereau, Moya O'Rourke, Martin Phipps, Colin Ross, Jack Scott, Sophie Thornton, Richard Williams, Paul Wood and Ann Woolhouse.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest made by Members of the Council.

3. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS RELATING TO URGENT BUSINESS

- 3.1 There were no questions relating to urgent business under the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 16.6(ii).

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS RELATING TO A NEW COMMITTEE SYSTEM OF GOVERNANCE FOR THE COUNCIL

- 4.1 The Lord Mayor (Councillor Gail Smith) reminded the Council of her announcement made at the previous meeting on 2nd March that she would permit public questions relating to the Council's governance arrangements to be asked at this meeting.

- 4.2 She reported that questions on that subject matter from two members of the public had been received prior to the published deadline for submission of questions for this meeting. One of the questioners was unable to attend the meeting and had asked that her questions be read out at the meeting on her behalf. The Lord Mayor stated that, on this occasion, she would use her discretion, as chair of the meeting, and permit this in order that the questions can be asked and responded to before Members of the Council debate the subject matter under the next item of business on the agenda.

- 4.3 The Lord Mayor added that questions on the subject matter from another member of the public had been received immediately prior to the start of the meeting and again she proposed to use her discretion, as chair of the meeting, and permit the questions to be asked.

4.4 Questions From Alan Kewley

- 4.4.1 Following our referendum in May 2021, what difference will ordinary citizens see when the new Local Area Committees (LACs) are implemented in May, 2022.

This referendum result was supposed to give ordinary citizens more involvement in Council decisions before they are implemented but these new

LACs seem much the same as previous Local Area Partnerships which were in place from 2013 to 2021 under a different name. I attended the Council meeting in 2013 when Local Area Partnerships were introduced to replace the previous Community Assemblies. They used the same boundaries but added Ward Forums to give ordinary citizens easier access to the decision-making process via their elected Councillors, which was welcome.

I've attended transitional meetings of now new South West LAC and raised questions about Ward Forums, but have not had a clear answer, nor had an opportunity for discussions.

Following our Referendum result, it's even more important that regular Ward Forums are included – each with an electorate of about 15,000 – to give them more “bottom-up” involvement in the new decision-making process. So therefore, my question is – Please reconsider this, otherwise most of the electorate will feel excluded from this new, but remote process.

- 4.4.2 In response, Councillor Julie Grocutt (Executive Member for Community Engagement and Governance) thanked Mr. Kewley for his question. Councillor Grocutt commented that the Council already had seven Local Area Committees (LACs) in operation, each of which comprised the local Councillors from four wards, and were working with local communities to develop and deliver local plans. She added that if Mr. Kewley was suggesting that Ward Forums be held in addition to the LACs, so that individual Wards have local meetings, then this would be a matter for the Councillors in each Ward to consider. Councillor Grocutt indicated that she thought this was a good idea and something that could be done in her Ward and recommended that Mr. Kewley should suggest this to his Local Area Committee. Furthermore, this could be considered as part of the ongoing review of the operation of the LACs, being overseen by Councillor Mary Lea.

The Committee System was going to work to make sure that all Councillors had a say in decisions made across the Council and the LACs would have an important role feeding into the new Committees. The appendix on page 53 of the report on the agenda regarding the new governance arrangements included a diagram which showed how the new system would work.

4.5 Questions From Ruth Hubbard (read out at the meeting by the Director of Legal and Governance)

- 4.5.1 Q1. At its first meeting, the Governance Committee received a report that included a long section on the background to governance change in Sheffield. As reported at the time, this was to ensure there was a proper record for people looking back, to tell the story of the background to Sheffield's governance change, and to recognise this as an historic moment.

However, the report and discussion did not even include one mention of the sole reason this Council was changing its governance system, which was entirely down to the work by citizens and communities organising for change, and for more democratic local governance under a modern committee system.

This is no mere technicality of an omission, it is rather like saying trade unions have no role and nothing to contribute to workers' rights. Or like saying tree campaigners have nothing to do with stopping street trees being felled.

For the record then, will this Council confirm that the overriding and primary reason why this Council is getting rid of "strong leader" governance is because of the collective action of Sheffield citizens and communities?

In response, Councillor Julie Grocutt (Executive Member for Community Engagement and Governance) stated that this room was full of Councillors and that she was not speaking out of turn when she said that we, of all people, believed very passionately in democracy, and the importance of all citizens' views, when we represent the public here. So much so, that we all give up most of our time to that cause every single day. Any suggestion that we were somehow trying to ignore or conceal the city-wide debate, petition and democratic referendum which led directly to this meeting today was both preposterous and easily refuted. She said that strained comparisons with invented criticism of Trade Unions or tree campaigners did not seem helpful. She felt we had done as much as we could, in good faith, and in the time available, to acknowledge and do justice to the views of the city, and had committed to improving the way we do this in future too.

Councillor Grocutt said that she wanted to be absolutely clear about this. She said the formal part of this change had come about from a multi-faceted, city-wide debate about local democracy which led to a petition and legally binding referendum - the result of which this Council had of course committed to respecting and delivering. Almost a quarter of the registered electors in Sheffield actively voted for a committee system, which was a decisive majority of the votes cast. She said that, as importantly, this Council had had to decide what kind of committee system to have, and because it had listened and was acting on the strength of feeling which the Council had heard from the city in all kinds of settings and voices over the past few years, including the campaigns to which the questioner referred and a range of other sources before and since the referendum, it was changing the way that it planned to make its decisions.

Not only were citizens' influence on this not being concealed, Councillor Grocutt was proud that their feedback had been fundamental to this approach, and they were why the proposals for Sheffield's committee system looked the way they did. She said that the Council could always do better. She referred to Section 6.2 of the report on the agenda which talked all about the short term, and medium term, aims to improve engagement and participation of the public, partners, stakeholders and more, alongside the new Local Area Committees.

- 4.5.2 Q.2. Given this apparent inability to acknowledge and embrace why governance change was happening, it is unsurprising that our Council had been unable to undertake any joint working for the task, and that Sheffield citizens and community agendas had not been addressed in a significant way to date. The conversation and negotiation had been driven by the concerns and questions of politicians and officers and for completing the basic technical work required, rather than by the experiences, agendas, concerns and questions of citizens

and communities.

Are there better prospects now for moving beyond the political and technocratic conversations to address the core aspirations and detailed agenda of citizens for more democratic local governance under a modern committee system? How will this happen, or will the Council continue to operate only on its own terms and according to its own agenda - and despite the claim to put Sheffield citizens first?

In response, Councillor Julie Grocutt stated that whilst there was always room for improvement, the Council had very openly worked on these designs with partners, citizens and stakeholders via a range of events since September. Hyperlinks in section 6.2.1 of the report lead to much more information about this work. The work was being supported and continued by our partner, Involve, as we speak, and Councillor Grocutt was grateful for the questioner's ongoing participation in that. She said that continued improvement of the new system was clearly built into the plans at recommendation two, and as can be seen in the report, the Council was being absolutely explicit about its intention for that exercise to be participative so that we have the benefit of all of our citizens' input.

- 4.5.3 Q.3. There were a number of other areas where its own stated governance principles do not match the proposals being put forward today. This question mentions just one of these areas.

Unlike almost all Councils going through governance change, this Council had consistently and repeatedly refused to make the basic decision that the new system would not be more bureaucratic and more costly. Council today was being asked to make its new governance system both more bureaucratic and more costly (not least in the very decision to establish - an extraordinary - 8 core Council committees). This choice would go against its own stated governance principles, the wishes of Sheffield citizens, and a very difficult budget position. It flies in the face of statutory guidance as well as the very recent government-required inspection report for Wirral council. There appeared to be no compelling reasons (including size of the Council) for such an odd and extreme decision although, in part, it seems to be based on early and tentative guidance given by a Chief Executive not currently in role. What were the compelling reasons why our Council wants to unnecessarily make its governance system more bureaucratic and more costly, and for no apparent benefit?

In response, Councillor Julie Grocutt stated that the reasons for the number of committees were discussed at Section 6.6.3 of the report and more detail could be found in reports to the Governance Committee since September. Hyperlinks to many of these were in the report. She said that the principle that 'the new committee system should not be over-complicated, or costly', had absolutely been in Members' minds throughout this process. It was agreed by the Committee as one of its first decisions, back in November 2021, and it was literally the first numbered principle at appendix 2. She added that it should be remembered that the Council was delivering a system which must not fail and

which, by its very nature, replaced individual decision-makers with multiple committees of multiple decision-makers. Councillor Grocutt said that although it might have been done somewhere, the Governance Committee did not find evidence that a transition to a committee system had been successfully delivered in a cost-neutral fashion by other councils, even where this had been the stated goal. As the Chief Executive said during the Committee's inquiry, this new system had to be resourced for success. However, Members were all very mindful of the financial pressures which the Council currently faces, and Councillor Grocutt emphasised that both the system and the cost of the system will remain under constant review over the coming years.

- 4.5.4 Q.4. The basic change of governance in the proposals today - from strong leader to modern committee system - was a far better starting point for democratic local governance in Sheffield despite the weaknesses, gaps and big omissions in the approach adopted by the Governance Committee, and in the content of the proposals today.

On participation, much of the mention of participation in the proposals was optional and aspirational rather than embedded and operationalised. The general focus was largely on more - rather than mechanisms for demonstrating better, deeper, more effective or impactful - participation. A particular weakness was in stakeholder and partner involvement where even a minor baseline of establishing and integrating stakeholders (e.g. heritage, equalities, social care organisations) in committee decision-making had not been reached.

Much of the thinking and statements on promoting equalities and mitigating inequalities remains vague and was not embedded or operationalised via actual mechanisms. It is 2022 and we still see vague intention, no data, no clear objectives, no targets, monitoring frameworks, nor the establishment of clear, measurable outcomes.

Are these two areas (amongst many) where this Council would expect to see improvements over coming months, including shifts in thinking towards elements of actual power-sharing, and demonstrable progress - evidenced not only by its own assessment but by citizens, communities and stakeholders?

In response, Councillor Julie Grocutt said that various options for consulting or even co-opting stakeholders as part of the decision-making process were not only newly available but were enshrined in the public participation and engagement toolkit, as set out in section 6.2.6, recommendation 12, and the Council had committed to further work on this over the medium term, as set out in section 6.2.6, recommendations 1-4. She said that the Council was committed to action that reduced inequality and improved equality of opportunity and inclusion across all of its work. She added that the Council had much further to go and the One Year Plan makes plain its commitment to become a fair, inclusive organisation that reflects the diversity of the city it served, and that tackles discrimination and prejudice wherever it was found. Understanding the impact of its decisions on different groups of people, and taking steps to mitigate these where any negative impact was identified, would be of fundamental importance for all of the new committees. The way that committees

would do this would be through consultation and engagement with the diverse communities across the city, understanding the evidence and data, by being clear about the outcomes that it expected, and by monitoring the impact that those decisions have had on different groups of people. Finally, as already stated, and as was clear from the report and recommendations, the Council was proposing a firm commitment to ongoing review and improvement of this system, with the involvement of citizens, communities and stakeholders.

4.6 Questions From Nigel Slack

4.6.1 Q1. The Governance Committee and the Officers and Councillors of that Committee have sweat blood over this proposal for the transition to a Modern Committee System for Sheffield City Council.

They are to be commended and I hope this meeting will not allow party politics to undermine all that hard work with petty amendments aimed at gaining some point scoring in the run up to May's elections.

A key expectation of the residents of the city in choosing to make this change is that Councillors and parties learn to work together for the common good of the city and put aside party pettiness to achieve the best future for the city.

Will Council therefore pass the recommendations in this report unchanged and allow the experience of the next months to be the guide as to what needs changing in time and how that is best achieved?

In response, Councillor Grocutt (Executive Member for Community Engagement and Governance) thanked Mr. Slack for his question. She said that the proposals on the table were indeed the result of much hard work from the Governance Committee and officers, led by the Director of Legal and Governance, and she wished to place on record her thanks and appreciation for all the hard work carried out on this matter by her and members of her team. She added however, that it was important to emphasise that the Council wouldn't be in this place at all, and the proposals would look very different, were it not also for the enormous energy and interest of Sheffield's public who had been integral to this design process – the campaigners, expert witnesses, community leaders and all the interested citizens who had made their voices heard, before and since the referendum, who had come to the engagement sessions across the city and online, or had given evidence to the inquiry, and Councillor Grocutt wished to place on record her thanks to all of them too.

With regard to the whether the recommendations should remain un-amended today, Councillor Grocutt stated that firstly, while she was proud of these recommendations and the work they represented, she was sure there was scope to improve them. She said that as soon as the system was launched in May, the Council would begin to learn what to adjust or change, but for now, she commended the recommendations to Council. Secondly, Councillor Grocutt stated that she couldn't, and wouldn't want to, fetter the judgement of Members here today, and that whilst politics shouldn't ever be "petty", the Council had heard from one of the academic inquiry witnesses that it was

usually a mistake to try and strip politics out of democratic bodies. She said that no doubt we would hear party positions today and that was right in a political environment, but the process of working up these proposals through the Governance Committee had been an excellent example of cross-party working for the benefit of the whole City, and in her opinion this was reflected in the nature of the cross-party motion and formal amendments which were going to be considered at the meeting.

- 4.6.2 Q2. In similar vein, will Council now undertake a review of the electoral rules in the city to consider the benefits of All Out elections and the better fit they offer for a Modern Committee System of Governance, with the consequent impact on better decision making and stability for the future?

(NOTE: This question did not receive a response at the meeting. Councillor Julie Grocutt (Executive Member for Community Engagement and Governance) has supplied an answer as follows –

“Moving to all out elections would represent a financial saving to the Authority of about £1.5m, over 6 years. In common with most metropolitan districts, Sheffield currently elected a third of its councillors in three out of every four years, with the fourth year ‘fallow’. All authorities had the option to alter their pattern of elections to move to ‘all-out elections’. This would mean all councillors being elected at the same time once every four years. There were benefits and disadvantages to any pattern of election, for example, electing by thirds gave voters a more frequent opportunity to express their views about the performance of their elected representatives, whereas all-out elections arguably promote a more stable political position for a longer period of time. Currently there were no plans to move to all out elections for Sheffield but this would continue to be kept under review.”)

5. COMMITTEE SYSTEM STRUCTURE

- 5.1 RESOLVED: On the Motion of Councillor Dianne Hurst, seconded by Councillor Sue Alston, that, in accordance with Council Procedure Rules 4 (Suspension and Amendment of Council Procedure Rules) and 11 (Motions which may be moved without notice):-

(a) Council Procedure Rule 17.5 be suspended to remove the time limit on the speeches of the mover and seconder of the motion and all other speakers shall have 2 minutes; and

(b) Council Procedure Rule 17.6 be suspended to remove the 25-minute time limit for the item of business.

- 5.2 It was moved by Councillor Julie Grocutt, and seconded by Councillor Penny Baker, that, as recommended in the report of the Director of Legal and Governance published with the agenda, and in accordance with the recommendations made by the Governance Committee at its meeting held on 9 March 2022, as relates to a new committee system of governance for Sheffield

City Council, it be:-

RESOLVED: That:-

- (1) the various elements of a committee system of governance set out in this report and its appendices, be agreed for implementation from the May 2022 AGM in line with the legally binding referendum of 6 May 2021 and subsequent resolution of Full Council on 19 May 2021;
- (2) the Governance Committee be instructed to conduct a review of the new governance system, commencing six months after implementation (November 2022) with a view to recommending improvements to Full Council for May 2023. This review will:-
 - a. Use the previously agreed 'strategic aims' and 'design principles' found at Appendix 2 as its success criteria;
 - b. Actively seek and use feedback from residents, stakeholders, partners, councillors and officers to inform its assessment against those criteria, in line with the new ways of working expected of all decision-makers within the new system; and
 - c. Take account of any changes to the local and national context;
- (3) all existing delegations to officers made by the Executive continue in force and effect save that a requirement to act in consultation with an Individual Executive Member will be read as a requirement to act in consultation with the appropriate Policy Committee Chair (as per section 6.12, recommendation 89 of the attached report);
- (4) the elements of a revised constitution which accompany this report (Appendix 5) be approved with effect from the 18 May 2022 Annual Meeting of the Council; and
- (5) the Director of Legal and Governance be requested to submit the full Constitution for approval to the 18 May 2022 Annual Meeting of Council.

5.3 Whereupon, it was moved by Councillor Cate McDonald, and seconded by Councillor Sioned-Mair Richards, as an amendment, that the motion now submitted be amended by the addition of a new paragraph (6) as follows:-

“(6) an additional recommendation relating to the role of the Policy Committees be inserted in the report, after paragraph 48, as follows:-

49. It is the responsibility of each Committee to work within the budget framework agreed by Council. This includes taking timely action to address any overspend within the services for which the Committee is responsible.”

5.4 It was then moved by Councillor Sue Alston, and seconded by Councillor Mike Levery, as an amendment, that the motion now submitted be amended by the addition of new paragraphs (6) to (16) as follows:-

- (6) thanks be recorded to officers who have worked on this process in a very

short timeframe, for getting this Council into a position where it is ready to change its system of governance;

(7) thanks be recorded to all the members of the public and expert witnesses who contributed ideas, knowledge and thoughts into the process;

(8) thanks be recorded to all Members on the Governance Committee for their leadership and patient work on these issues, which were an excellent example of cross-party working;

(9) Council affirms its commitment to the new committee system improving democratic accountability of the Council and engagement with the public;

(10) as part of the six-month review of the new system (as per recommendation 2) the Governance Committee should specifically consider the merits of devolving more decision-making powers to Local Area Committees (LACs), to enable services to be more responsive to local need and engage more directly with the people they are used by, specifically greater responsibility at the LAC level for:

- a. parks & open spaces,
- b. the discharge of functions of the Council as a Charity Trustee,
- c. local libraries,
- d. small highway projects,
- e. parking regulation and
- f. street scene;

(11) as part of any future delegation to LACs, consideration should be given to reducing the remit of some policy committees accordingly;

(12) at the point of any future delegation to LACs and reduction in remit of some policy committees, consideration should be given to combining two or more committees in order to free up officer resource to support the LACs further;

(13) were policy committees to be combined as a result of the six month review, the new merged policy committees could cover the work of more than one Executive Director;

(14) it be noted that, were policy committees to be combined as a result of the six month review, this may provide an opportunity for co-chairing as each chair could liaise with one team of officers;

(15) the Governance Committee be requested to bring forward proposals relating to the above recommendations 10-14 in time for them to be considered alongside the budget proposals for the next financial year; and

(16) Council reaffirms its commitment to continuing to be responsive to the people of Sheffield and providing good governance to this City.

5.5 After contributions from ten other Members, and in accordance with Council

Procedure Rule 17.13 (Motions which may be moved during debate), it was RESOLVED: On the motion of Councillor Dianne Hurst, seconded by Councillor Shaffaq Mohammed, that in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 17.14 (Closure Motions), the question be now put.

- 5.6 Following the decline of the right of reply by Councillor Julie Grocutt, the amendment moved by Councillor Cate McDonald was put to the vote and was carried.
- 5.7 The amendment moved by Councillor Sue Alston was then put to the vote and was negatived.
- 5.8 The original Motion, as amended, was then put as a Substantive Motion in the following form and carried:-

RESOLVED: That:-

- (1) the various elements of a committee system of governance set out in this report and its appendices, be agreed for implementation from the May 2022 AGM in line with the legally binding referendum of 6 May 2021 and subsequent resolution of Full Council on 19 May 2021;
- (2) the Governance Committee be instructed to conduct a review of the new governance system, commencing six months after implementation (November 2022) with a view to recommending improvements to Full Council for May 2023. This review will:-
 - a. Use the previously agreed 'strategic aims' and 'design principles' found at Appendix 2 as its success criteria;
 - b. Actively seek and use feedback from residents, stakeholders, partners, councillors and officers to inform its assessment against those criteria, in line with the new ways of working expected of all decision-makers within the new system; and
 - c. Take account of any changes to the local and national context;
- (3) all existing delegations to officers made by the Executive continue in force and effect save that a requirement to act in consultation with an Individual Executive Member will be read as a requirement to act in consultation with the appropriate Policy Committee Chair (as per section 6.12, recommendation 89 of the attached report);
- (4) the elements of a revised constitution which accompany this report (Appendix 5) be approved with effect from the 18 May 2022 Annual Meeting of the Council;
- (5) the Director of Legal and Governance be requested to submit the full Constitution for approval to the 18 May 2022 Annual Meeting of Council; and
- (6) an additional recommendation relating to the role of the Policy Committees be inserted in the report, after paragraph 48, as follows:-

49. It is the responsibility of each Committee to work within the budget framework agreed by Council. This includes taking timely action to address any overspend within the services for which the Committee is responsible.”.