

SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

Special meeting held 28 November 2019

PRESENT: Councillors Mick Rooney (Chair), Ian Auckland, Steve Ayris, Julie Grocutt, Tim Huggan, Douglas Johnson, Mike Levery, Cate McDonald, Sioned-Mair Richards and Jim Steinke

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 An apology for absence was received from Councillor Denise Fox.

2. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

2.1 No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public and press.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

4.1 There were no questions raised or petitions submitted by members of the public.

5. GOVERNANCE REVIEW - EVIDENCE GATHERING SESSION 2

5.1 The Committee received a report of the Policy and Improvement Officer setting out the schedule for the second evidence gathering session as part of the governance review.

Local Organisations with an Interest in Governance and Decision-Making

5.2 Ruth Hubbard – It's Our City

5.2.1 The Committee received a report from 'It's Our City' setting out the community perspective of the decision making processes in Sheffield City Council. The report outlined commentary and evidence as a result of almost 20,000 conversations held with Sheffield citizens during the Sheffield People's Petition campaign.

5.2.2 Ms Hubbard thanked the Committee for considering the evidence submitted by 'It's Our City' and stated that scrutiny would hopefully amplify the voice of 'It's Our City'. She outlined people's frustrations with the current governance system and that from the exceptional response of the Sheffield communities and of their overwhelming aspiration to see a more democratic council governance, this has resulted in the statutory requirement for the City Council to develop a modern committee system model of governance which would be voted on in a city wide

referendum.

5.2.3 The Group's concerns in terms of decision making in Sheffield were-

- How are the citizens of Sheffield listened to and enabled to influence decision making within the City;
- How can people participate in decision making; and
- What is the purpose of governance at Sheffield City Council

5.2.4 The Committee was advised that the public's confidence in Sheffield City Council had declined between 2016-2018, and they were highly critical of the 'strong leader' model of the Council.

5.2.5 Ruth talked about community principles for a modern committee system, which included fair and meaningful representation, increased participation and impact, cultural change hand in hand with new system structures and processes and setting clear standards and improvements.

5.2.6 Members of the Committee raised questions and the following responses were provided:-

- 80-90% of people approached over the year wanted to sign the petition and this had to be used to trigger the referendum for a change in governance;
- It was felt that Sheffield City Council was excluding the public from participating. Other council, for example Nottingham City Council, held area committees, which included representation from different community groups. In their opinion, holding public question sessions at the beginning of committees and meetings was not the best form of public engagement/participation;
- Sheffield City Council needed to start building strong relationships with community groups as at the moment they did not think the Council listened to their views. It was stated that the public did not like consultations;
- The strong-leader model was seen as top heavy with a low voter mandate. It's Our City wanted a referendum to change to a committee system as they did not think the current system was a good fit for Sheffield, they wished to see more proportionate participation in decision making;
- In terms of decision making, the public would rather see more thoughtful decisions than quick decision making.

5.2.7 The Chair thanked 'It's Our City' for their contribution and, in summary, commented that the petition was not wholly representative of the electorate and there were still the views of a further 95% of the city to consider. A decision should not be made on the views of only 5% of the electorate as a new model of governance would be in place for a minimum of 10 years.

5.3 *Nigel Slack – Active Citizen*

5.3.1 The Committee received the Independent Governance Event report and a paper on “Transforming Sheffield City Council Governance”. On 30th October 2019, a Big City Conversation event was held at Sheffield Town Hall, independently chaired by Nigel Slack. The event was the first of two. It gave members of the public the opportunity to talk about how they wanted to engage with the Council on issues that mattered to them and contribute to the debate on how Sheffield City Council makes decisions ahead of the referendum on 7th May 2020.

5.3.2 As part of the conversations with the public about governance, most of the responses concerned issues about Planning matter, and refuse bins, not directly about how the Council makes decisions. However, the issues raised were still in a way affected by how the Council made its decisions.

5.3.3 Mr Slack referred to the document ‘Transforming Sheffield City Council’s Governance, which was well received by the Leader of the Council, but a lack of action following this report has led to where the Council was now.

5.3.4 Mr Slack outlined principles for the design of the proposed change to a committee model:-

- Structure – Open and transparent decision making
- Neighbourhoods – Devolved decision making
- Transparency – Open information

5.4 *Vicky Seddon, Co-Ordinator, Sheffield 4 Democracy*

5.4.1 The Committee considered information from a response to an online call for evidence and a paper on Sheffield for Democracy Improvements we seek to local democracy in Sheffield City Council.

5.4.2 Good decision making was seen as timely, well informed, taking into account different effects on individuals and communities, with clear explanation why the decisions had been taken.

5.4.3 Ms Seddon talked about what their preferred outcomes of democratic renewals would be, ranging from more people participating and being engaged with a greater cross-section of Sheffield’s population doing so. It was felt that greater political stability was needed between elections. Currently, with elections being every year for three years, then a fallow year, Members seemed to be constantly in election mode, seemingly attacking each other instead of working together to deal with important issues. It was preferred that all out local elections should take place every 4 years.

5.4.4 Members of the Committee raised questions with both Nigel Slack and Vicky Seddon and the following responses were provided:-

- There should be a right of public consultation within the Council’s Constitution, as it wasn’t clear at present;

- It was felt that the whip system was a good idea as it ensured things got done, however it could also create a very small voting majority;
- It was agreed with Members that cross party working happened; however there was still a duty for the public to be involved in meetings such as scrutiny. It was found difficult to submit evidence to the Council; the Council should be striving to create structure that promotes cultural changes. As referred to in the document submitted to the Committee 'Residents were unhappy with the way some Councillors treated each other and the public and the seeming impunity with which bad behaviour was tolerated'. It was felt that there should be a clear code of conduct and clear sanctions, as it wasn't thought the current process was acceptable and did not promote good Member behaviour;
- Social media also had an impact on Member behaviour and now with this being a big part of reality, it wasn't sure how this would be dealt with;
- In terms of dealing with important/urgent decisions under a new system, it was thought the Council needed to find a consensus view/decision on difficult matters and if a committee decision was needed then a recorded vote should be taken so the public knew which way a Member had voted;
- Decisions should be balanced by informing the public that if a decision is not taken on a particular matter it would be more transparent to explain what would happen instead;
- Development was crucial for new Members and, if necessary, money should be re-directed into training for improved democracy.

Views of the Voluntary Sector and Business Community

5.5 Maddy Desforges – Vountary Action Sheffield

5.5.1 The Committee received a paper from Voluntary Action Sheffield setting out the views of the Service on the decision-making structures in Sheffield. The paper contained information on suggested principles to be applied as part of the decision-making process, issues to be addressed, components of what the revised structures might look like, and suggested things for the Council to avoid as part of the review.

5.5.2 Maddy Desforges stated initially that the sector welcomed the review as it was deemed a very important issue to the voluntary sector. She stated that the Council should not, at this stage, be considering whether to maintain a cabinet and leader system or move to a committee system, but needed to agree on the best model for the City, then look at the various structures. In any new governance model, it was important that the views of the public, all Council partners and communities were listened to as part of any future decision-making processes. Ms Desforges referred to the importance of long-term decision-making, robust scrutiny and accountability. She stressed that there was a need to ensure that various methods of democracy were used as part of a new governance model, and it was vital that the public had their say in future decision-making. She concluded by highlighting the importance of a change in culture, indicating that such changes could take some time.

5.6 Richard Wright – Sheffield Chamber of Commerce

5.6.1 Richard Wright stated that the Chamber represented a wide variety of organisations that employed people, with the majority being private bodies, but also a number of public services, such as the Universities and University Technical Colleges. The Chamber attempted to assist organisations to meet current legislation, and represented the only one-stop shop facility with regard to international trade. Mr Wright reported on the roles and responsibilities of the Chamber, referring specifically to the City which, amongst other things, included the responsibility to create wealth and employ people. Mr Wright reported on the importance of partnership working, indicating that such practice had improved over the last few years, resulting in several positive achievements, such as flood defences and the University Technical Colleges. It was important for the Chamber to have good relationships and good communication links with the City's decision-makers. He considered that many proposed governance changes would be difficult due to the changing political environment, but stressed that, if any proposed change did not work out for any reason, the Authority should accept this and take action straightaway.

5.6.2 Members of the Committee raised questions with both Maddy Desforges and Richard Wright, and the following responses were provided:-

- The voluntary and community sector in Sheffield was very strong, with a high proportion of adults either volunteering or being active in some way. Performance of the sector compared very favourably with the other Core Cities, and there was a strong network of community 'anchor' organisations which acted as links for many local communities and individuals. Such groups had assisted the sector in helping to make better use of NHS England funding. Whilst successful, the sector could make more use of such organisations, and it had been identified that there was a need for the sector to work more collaboratively with the Council and its partners, particularly with regard to leveraging in funds from charities. The sector had been very proactive in connection with the recent Winter Planning through working with the NHS and the Council.
- The sector was already represented on a number of boards and committees, and would like such arrangements to continue under any new governance model. As part of any changes, the sector would like to engage more effectively with the Council and its partners, and considered it important that members of the public needed to know who and where they could influence decisions, preferably at an early stage of the process.
- The Chamber tended to liaise with the Council's Executive, rather than individual Members. The Chamber is of the view that there was a lack of consistency in terms of the Authority's planning processes, and considered that decisions of the Planning and Highways Committee should be made for the good of the City, as opposed to be made in accordance with rules and regulations.
- It was considered that the Authority had made considerable progress in terms of helping the public to understand why certain decisions had been

made.

- It has been well documented in recent times that trust of the political system and politicians had declined. It was also considered that relationships between the Council and the public had become too remote. There was a need for the Council to do things 'with' the public and not 'to' the public. Once trust had broken down, it often took a long time to get that trust back.
- A No Deal Brexit, which in effect, was the current position, was the worst case scenario, and the very short timescale involved meant that it was highly likely a trade deal could not be negotiated. A No Deal Brexit would result in a number of adverse effects on the British economy.
- The view of the Chamber of Commerce was that Yorkshire and the Humber was struggling to work as a region and whilst it was hoped this situation could improve, there were doubts that it would.
- Both Maddy Desforges and Richard Wright had been members of the Sheffield Partnership Board, which they considered was a very useful forum in terms of what it was trying to achieve as a City. The forum was now known as Business Sheffield, and it had a good working relationship with the Chamber, undertaking some positive work.
- There had been a number of excellent relationships between the Council and the voluntary and community sector. In terms of the devolvement of budgets, with the current arrangement comprising the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), it was believed that, whilst having its benefits, this was too Member led, with insufficient input from the voluntary and community sector. There was a need for a more formal mechanism in terms of how people could put forward their views with regard to influencing decisions. There still remained a lack of trust of the Council as people's views were often ignored. There was also the belief within the voluntary and community sector that the Council was not doing anything of any benefit to them. A large proportion of the public did not really have a clear idea as to precisely what the Council does.
- Both the Chamber of Commerce and Voluntary Action Sheffield had very little contact with the Town and Parish Councils.
- The Manor Action Group were viewed as a very positive and helpful approach to bringing together organisations working in a local area, but, to date, had limited involvement from local businesses.

5.7 **Written Evidence Provided Through the Online Call for Evidence**

- 5.7.1 The Committee received the written evidence provided through the online Call For Evidence, which contained 691 responses.
- 5.7.2 The Chair reported that there was nothing significantly unexpected in terms of the responses received, and there was a correlation between the evidence provided

and that provided by the other witnesses.

5.8 **Member Discussion**

5.8.1 Members raised the following comments following the receipt of views of the voluntary sector and business community, and the evidence provided through the online Call For Evidence:-

- It is apparent that there was a certain level of frustration within the business community in terms of working with the Council, in the sense that it did not consider that the Council had a clear vision or strategy.
- There was a need for more clarity in terms of how what was going on in Sheffield could be linked to the wider South Yorkshire and Yorkshire and Humberside region to ensure that everyone was heading in a similar direction.
- Some Members believe that, in their capacity as local Councillors, they did not consider themselves to have any links into the local business sector.
- It was important to ensure that people had confidence in the City, in the sense that new businesses coming to the City would provide investment, as well as providing additional business rates. This, in turn, would provide more jobs, and attract more people to the City, resulting in increases in Council Tax receipts.
- It was hoped that, as part of any new governance model, it was important that links between the Council and the business sector and other government organisations were improved.
- There was a need to look at the Council's existing governance structures, particularly on the basis that there appeared to be little connection between the Council and its partners, such as the NHS and the police. There was a need to both undertake an audit of all relevant partner organisations and be clear about lines of communication and engagement.
- It was clear that the voluntary and community sector wanted to be consulted more, and that there was a need for the Council to direct more resources into being more open and engaging with the Sector. Feedback in respect of the partnership boards indicated that they were often viewed as "closed shops".
- There was a need to review a number of areas of current working, including scrutiny, engagement with the voluntary and community sector and locality working.
- It would be helpful if Members could provide examples of good practice, or otherwise, of partnership/locality working in their respective Wards.

- All Members, as part of the Big City Conversation, had given a commitment in their respective Wards to look at how the Council could improve its working relationship with local communities.
- The Council needed to look at all the issues raised, regardless of the result of the referendum.
- Consideration needs to be given to how the process of providing written answers to members of the public's questions could be improved.
- It was recognised that Full Council meetings could be used more creatively to provide a more meaningful forum for debate.
- It was hoped that, under any new governance model, Members would not have to approve numerous sets of committee minutes at Council meetings, as had been the case under the old committee system.
- It was acknowledged that, if the referendum resulted in a preference for a committee system, a considerable amount of work would then be required to look at the structure of a new system.
- Consideration should be given to the most appropriate forum at which governance issues could be considered in the future.

5.9 The Committee received a report written by the Sheffield Young Advisers and Sheffield Youth Cabinet. The report gave feedback from these two groups of young people, following key questions submitted to them regarding the future decision making structure of the City Council. Emma Hinchliffe, Sheffield Futures Involvement Lead, gave a brief summary of discussions held at meetings of the groups.

5.10 The question "What does good decision making look like to you" was asked and the responses were as follows:-

- The way the central government and local government produce documents was not very clear. It was felt that there should be more transparency in the decision-making process, so that young people might feel more able to engage in democracy.
- Documents should be written in a way that everyone can understand and has to be representative of all young people.
- Accessibility – the use of different languages, using easy to understand words.
- Have involvement from the start and then give updated versions of the decisions made to build good relationships within communities.
- The consequences of a decision and how it has an effect; transparency

and the ability to access key decisions that have or are to be made and the ability to have input on that decision.

- It was felt that there was under representation of some ethnic minority groups.
- It was felt that the City Council's website was not very clear. Most of the young people present said that they had difficulty in finding and accessing documents on the website and that not everything was available. If Council documents were readily available, people might engage more.
- Many young people were not aware of the current system and how it works. They feel they are unable to access information regarding the new system and how to form an opinion on it and then vote.
- Documents need to be concise.
- People don't realise what they are voting for at elections.

5.11 The Chair asked if there was anything specific that prevented young people voting and their ability to vote. The responses given were as follows:-

- Due to people not being able to vote until they reach the age of 18, stopped young people taking an interest in voting. It was felt that if the age was lowered, more young people might engage more.
- With regard to Brexit, under 18s didn't get the chance to vote but the upcoming General Election has been called due to the issues surrounding Brexit.
- Again, there should be more transparency, young people don't get to know about what's happening.
- Democracy and politics should be implemented into education. One young person had a module in school that lasted for two weeks and covered basic democracy. Those present felt that democracy should be part of the curriculum and if it was, more young people might become more interested and get involved.
- Those present had friends who were not registered to vote as they did not know how to or at what age they were eligible to register.
- If more information was provided, it was felt that more interest would be taken. A lot of young people don't know what to look for or how to access information.
- Children should engage more in schools. The vote should be given to 16 year olds. By not giving the vote to 16 year olds shows that the views of young people are not taken on board and the young therefore become

disengaged. In Scotland, children can register to vote at the age of 14.

- Heard many people say that young people are not educated enough to make a decision, but being given the right to vote is the best way that young people can participate.
- The legal age to work is 13, so if a young person can earn a wage, should they also be able given the right to make decisions about what affects their future.
- People are too apathetic and it's easy to say that young people are not able to give an informed opinion on anything. The system should be more enabling towards young people.
- When the recent Health and Social Care Strategy was at the "final draft" stage, the Youth Cabinet felt that they should have been given an input into the Strategy before a decision was taken. They felt that they should have a say on something that covers five years and could have an effect on them. The Youth Cabinet also felt that they should have had a chance to contribute.
- It's about getting young people involved at the start of projects, getting them involved.
- The majority of Sheffield people don't know how decisions are made. One of the reasons that the turnout for local elections is low is because they don't know what they are voting for, and cannot make an informed vote.
- Councillors are never seen in local areas and the only time MPs are seen is around election time. Paul Blomfield, MP, is pro-active and gets groups together in his area to find out what they want. Young people want Councillors and MPs to ask them what they want, perhaps by visiting youth clubs, youth services, schools, etc. If people don't see their local Councillor, they don't engage, mainly because they don't know what they do.
- It was felt that Councillors needed to get out into the community more by attending local events. They had admiration for the former Lord Mayor as he attended many local events and was passionate about what he believed.
- With regard to Ward boundaries, it was stated that the Electoral Commission decides on these and are determined by roughly the same number of constituents in each Ward, which typically makes the Central Ward a very wide and diverse area.
- In Sheffield, there are many young people charity-centred activities. Youth clubs take place every night of the week and Sheffield Futures could direct Councillors to where groups/meetings are taking place.

- Due to many schools now being academy run, permission is needed to go onto school premises; Councillors have to wait to be invited to attend. It was felt that Councillors could be more proactive in asking schools to let them in and give talks to young people, maybe during assemblies, about the Council, how it is run and about their local area.
- Lives could be changed in areas where not enough young people are involved in politics, by engaging more with them.
- There was a need to inform the public why a decision has been taken, not just say that the decision has been made.
- The Council's website was not clear and concise, it was complicated. Much more could be publicised through social media by signing up for facebook, twitter, Instagram etc. Young people can understand and relate to this and find it more accessible.
- The young people were informed that Council, Cabinet and Scrutiny Committee meetings were now webcast and can be found on the Council's website.

5.12 The Chair thanked members of Sheffield Young Advisors, Sheffield Youth Cabinet and Sheffield Futures for attending the meeting and said that he didn't want this meeting to be the first and last time that the Council met with them. He suggested that a cross-party working group could be established with a long term link into the Youth Council.

5.13 **Evidence given by Robin Hughes – Joined Up Heritage, Sheffield**

5.13.1 A written submission was previously circulated to the Committee.

5.13.2 Robin Hughes explained that he had experience of negotiating with the Council on heritage matters and within its current governance arrangements. He then identified key areas for improvement, as set out below.

5.13.3 A change in attitude was important and a process of change in governance arrangements would not guarantee that. It was about more than structures but might include an all-party, non-partisan culture. The experience of Planning and Highways Committee was that it operated in a non-partisan way. However, perception may be different and so appearance of the way it operated was also important.

5.13.4 There was a high level of skills/knowledge required and it was important that a committee was able to challenge effectively and with sufficient knowledge to do so. In any new system, councillors should participate in training and proactively seek to develop themselves. In addition to their own skills and knowledge, councillors would also need to seek advice from experts, including officers of the Council with specialist knowledge and external expertise, where appropriate.

- 5.13.5 It was also important to see any potential conflict between decisions, such as those taken for economic reasons, and the potential effect on other relevant issues and aims.
- 5.13.6 Continuity and consistency were considered to be important in the development of relationships and it was also felt that there should be a limit on the powers of individuals.
- 5.13.7 It was thought that structures may be a consequence of the culture of an organisation and there was a risk in any change of structure that the previous (in this case, cabinet) structure would simply be carried over in another form (such as lead committee chairs). Any new generation of Chairs should be from a range of political parties and in a culture which did not allow individuals to dominate.
- 5.13.8 There should also be a good scheme of delegation which needed to be carefully handled and there was a potential for small sub- committees to be formed as part of a new structure. Decisions about policy should be collective and not made at an individual level.
- 5.13.9 Stability would help to foster relationships with the heritage community and it was hoped that there would be early engagement and demonstrable opportunities for input throughout the decision making process. Such an example was the Heart of the City Two Project and the opportunity for open conversations in the design of a scheme that worked with heritage and without compromising viability. This was considered to be an open and inclusive approach and was a benchmark for such decisions and would result in a better scheme.
- 5.13.10 Changing peoples' perceptions was an issue and there was a need to be seen to make a difference. This should be measured to take the temperature of public perception before and after a change.
- 5.13.11 Members of the Committee asked questions and responses were provided by Robin Hughes, as summarised below:-
- In reference to a question concerning longevity and the term of committee membership, there was a balance in ensuring that the composition of a committee was not either entirely static or subject to sudden change. In practice, it was thought that the process may manage itself. There was also a lot to be said for experience and the commitment of committee members and their own recognition of their responsibilities.
 - There had to be some agreed protocol in respect of relationships, such as between Members and officers and Members and developers and to avoid a situation where any individual had the final say. However, it was acknowledged that protocol alone may not solve some problems.
 - In relation to how a different system might address perceived problems, it was important for the public to understand what they were able to do to participate and hold discussions with those making decisions as part of the process of decision making.

- In relation to people standing for public office as members of the Council and enhancing representation and a connection with communities, it was important to have in place training and opportunities for the acquisition of relevant knowledge in order for Members to carry out their roles.
- At the same time, it was appropriate not to set too high a bar for entry, but for training to be supportive and to provide the appropriate tools. It would also be possible for newer Members to acquire skills from existing committee members. Training could be seen as a set of tools which were relatively easily deliverable and which provided knowledge and it was appropriate to offer learning materials to councillors. It was also acknowledged that most people did not come into the Council as experts.
- It was suggested that a heritage committee was established because heritage was considered fundamental to the economic success of the city and it had related social and health benefits. It was therefore important to build on the advantages of those heritage benefits. It also allowed the city to compete, using its own heritage characteristics and provided people with a sense of belonging. The particular story of a city helped to root people in that place.

5.14 Evidence given by Dr Karen Ford

- 5.14.1 A written submission was previously circulated to the Committee.
- 5.14.2 Dr Karen Ford spoke about her experience of putting objections to the Council's Planning and Highways Committee, in writing and then by attending a meeting of the Committee. She commented on the amount of time (five minutes) allocated to people wishing to speak at the Committee and said she felt that questions that she had raised had not been answered. She said that the experience had been off-putting, in terms of her engaging with other issues in the future.
- 5.14.3 She said that the cabinet system placed the power to make decisions in the hands of a small number of people. Any new system of governance would need to be transparent and it was considered that there was a lack of transparency in the way some decisions, such as those regarding the Highways Private Finance Initiative (PFI) were made. There also needed to be a change in attitude and a process which was clear and transparent and in service of action.
- 5.14.4 Dr Ford suggested four principles, namely fair and meaningful representation; increased participation and impact; cultural, structural and process change; and clear standards and measuring improvement. She enquired as to the extent to which the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) was being engaged in the process and use made of its expertise. Support could also be given to councillors to be confident about engaging with experts and knowing when it was the right time to seek expertise.
- 5.14.5 The Chair clarified that the CfPS had addressed the Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 26 November and had also participated in the public event held on 30 October 2019.

5.14.6 Members of the Committee asked questions and responses were provided by Dr Karen Ford, as summarised below:-

- As regards the role of councillors and relationships, which included respect and necessary challenge, it was felt that the role of officers (for example in the Planning and Highways Committee) was not clear, although in the particular case to which she was referring (regarding an application for student accommodation), it appeared that the Committee accepted what officers had written in the report together with its assumptions. A comment was made that the role of officers was to enable elected Members to carry out their roles properly.
- As regards the Planning and Highways Committee and whether it was felt that Members were familiar with the site under consideration, Dr Ford said that the site was near to other sites previously considered and she was unsure as to whether the Committee grasped the implications for people living in that area.

5.15 **Evidence given by Kevin Poppelwell**

5.15.1 A written submission was previously circulated to the Committee.

5.15.2 Kevin Poppelwell informed the Committee that he would like to see a more democratic Council and he commented that the term 'strong leader' could be perceived as having negative connotations.

5.15.3 In response to a question from a member of the Committee, Mr Poppelwell said that he believed a modern committee system was one where decisions were based upon all the relevant information being available to the decision makers and for decisions not to be made by a small number of people.

5.15.4 Mr Robin Hughes then commented that it was necessary to make it clear to people what the Council did and did not do. He said it would be important not to repeat the problems experienced in the previous (pre-2000) committee system. He also said that the issue was not so much about structure but what worked well and the outcomes in delivering services. It was also important to have councillors that were properly involved in the process.

5.15.5 In responding to a question concerning the experience of attending and speaking at Planning and Highways Committee and in relation to a particular planning application, Dr Karen Ford said that she had been given five minutes to speak at that meeting. She commented that she believed there were certain assumptions in the officer's report and which were not fully explained when queried. Therefore, she had felt ignored and commented that there had been a lack of response to the issues which she had raised.

5.15.6 As to whether it had been explained or made clear that the Planning Committee would only look at planning considerations, Dr Ford said that had not been apparent to her.

5.16 **Green Party evidence** – The item was deferred.

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 6.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be a special meeting, and would be held on Tuesday, 3rd December, 2019, at 1.00 pm, in the Town Hall.

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