



Governance Committee Report

Report of: Director of Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer)

Date: 30 November 2021

Subject: Review of Draft Design Principles

Author of Report: Alexander Polak, Assistant Director (Governance)

Summary:

The purpose of this report is:

1. To present, as requested, feedback from members of the public and stakeholders about the previously-agreed draft design principles.
 2. To review and update the 'draft design principles' as desired in light of this feedback
 3. To agree the draft design principles, as amended, to continue to be used for the purpose of guiding the design, and future review, of Sheffield's modern committee governance model.
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Recommendations:

1. *That the feedback from members of the public and stakeholders (Appendix 1) be noted;*
 2. *That the draft design principles be amended in light of this feedback, as per Appendix 2 subject to any alterations agreed; and*
 3. *That these design principles, as amended, continue to be used for the purpose of guiding the design, and future review, of Sheffield's modern committee governance model, subject to any further review in the course of ongoing public engagement.*
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Background Papers: N/A

Category of Report: OPEN

Statutory and Council Policy Checklist

Financial Implications
NO - Cleared by: Kayleigh Inman
Legal Implications
NO - Cleared by: Sarah Bennett
Equality of Opportunity Implications
NO - Cleared by: James Henderson
Tackling Health Inequalities Implications
NO
Human rights Implications
NO:
Environmental and Sustainability implications
NO
Economic impact
NO
Community safety implications
NO
Human resources implications
NO
Property implications
NO
Area(s) affected
None
Relevant Cabinet Portfolio Member
Councillor Julie Grocutt, Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Community Engagement and Governance
Is the item a matter which is reserved for approval by the City Council?
NO
Press release
NO

REVIEW OF DRAFT DESIGN PRINCIPLES

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Governance Committee has been appointed by Sheffield City Council to lead the work which will take the Council from a 'Leader and Cabinet' model of Governance to a 'Committee' model. The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny is advising the Council in this process and, in accordance with their published guidance on the subject, the Committee has sought to establish design principles as one of its first steps.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 On 6th May 2021, a Sheffield City Council Governance Referendum was held to determine whether the Council should be run by a leader who is an elected councillor chosen by a vote of the other elected councillors (which is how it is run now), or alternatively, by one or more committees made up of elected councillors. One result of this referendum was [a binding resolution by Sheffield City Council on 19 May 2021](#) that it will, with effect from the start of the 2022/23 Municipal Year, cease to operate executive arrangements and start to operate a committee system of governance. The Governance Committee has been established to lead this process.

2.2 Three key parts of the governance change process have been defined as follows:

- to engage with and listen to a range of stakeholders about the change and about ways of working within the future governance model;
- to design the governance structure and ways of working within that structure; and
- to design and implement any necessary changes to the support the council gives to members, officers and the public in order to enable this new structure and ways of working to succeed.

2.3 The committee previously noted that the Council doesn't have time between now and May 2022 to finish each of these steps in this order, in isolation from one another. All three are expected to run concurrently to some extent. As well as helping us hit our immovable May 2022 deadline, this 'iterative' approach is expected to provide a good environment in which stakeholder engagement can meaningfully feed into design work, and vice versa.

2.4 The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny has produced a range of

materials designed to guide and support local authorities which embark on a change of governance model. Section 4 of their November 2020 report '[Rethinking Council Governance for the 20s](#)' describes the importance of agreeing what they call 'design principles' early on in the process. Their advice is that:

“These should not be vague, general aspirations such as making the council operate more democratically or enhancing transparency. They should be tangible aims that you can use for two purposes:

- *To reach a judgement on possible new governance models – seeing whether proposed structures and ways of working are likely to live up to your objectives;*
- *To return to in future to help you to come to a judgment on whether your new systems are working or not.”*

2.5 The CfGS give examples to demonstrate the clarity they suggest is needed in the objectives, such as “involve councillors more in the development of key policies” or “seek to engage more fundamentally with local people and their needs.”

3.0 HOW THE CURRENT PRINCIPLES WERE AGREED

3.1 A [report to the Governance Committee on 20 September 2021](#) set out the context of a set of proposed draft design principles, which could be adapted from work carried out in 2019 by Sheffield City Council's Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee. That work included a series of evidence gathering sessions in order to hear from a range of witnesses about the ideal operation of any future governance model. This included experts in local governance and decision making, local organisations with an interest in local democracy, partners from business and the Voluntary Community and Faith sector, Youth Cabinet and Youth Advisers. They also invited contributions from citizens through an online call for evidence and attendance at meetings, and undertook site visits and conversations with other local authorities to learn from their experiences of operating different governance models. A full list of witnesses, links to the evidence they considered and webcasts of their meetings can be found in that committee's final report, '[Principles for Governance at Sheffield City Council](#)'.

3.2 The 'governance principles' and 'how we do business (ways of working)' from that final report, [later endorsed by the entire Council on 8 January 2020](#), were adapted slightly by the Governance Committee and agreed as a set of 'draft design principles' for the move to a committee system, at their [20 September 2021](#) meeting.

3.3 At its [27 October meeting](#), the Governance Committee agreed to add some further design principles to the list, relating specifically to the council's ambitions for effective engagement. These can be found in

Appendix 2 under the heading 'engagement principles'.

4.0 ONGOING REVIEW ALONGSIDE DESIGN

4.1 At the point that the draft design principles were agreed, members also agreed that they would be 'used as the basis for immediate stakeholder engagement' and 'kept under review throughout the planned cycles of stakeholder engagement and design up to and beyond May 2022'.

4.2 'Immediate commencement of design work for the new committee governance model on the basis of these design principles' was endorsed, which is why there is a report elsewhere on today's agenda which presents a degree of design progress against the principles as agreed in September. However it was 'noted' by the committee that 'early design work may need to retrospectively take account of any future revisions to the design principles'. In other words, any changes to design principles as the result of this paper, will need to be retrospectively applied to that paper over the course of the ongoing inquiry.

5.0 ENGAGEMENT

5.1 Members have been clear that the development of and transition to a committee system in Sheffield will be fundamentally based on the views and ambitions of Sheffielders.

5.2 At its 20 September meeting the Governance committee agreed 'the immediate commencement of stakeholder engagement activity' along the following lines:

"Topic-by-topic engagement with internal and external stakeholders on technical questions as they arise for the Committee's consideration, including via an open public invitation for participants to contribute via a stakeholder group made up of interested parties"

5.3 At its [27 October meeting](#), the Governance Committee agreed further detail about the approach to engaging the public and stakeholders in this design process.

5.4 Accordingly, the draft design principles were used as part of the basis for the first two of the regular, public, stakeholder engagement events which have been taking place since 22 October. Further comments relating to the principles have continued to be gathered since.

5.5 **The detail of the events and of the feedback received is set out at Appendix 1.**

6.0 REVIEWING THE PRINCIPLES

- 6.1 A revised set of design principles is included at Appendix 2 with changes tracked (and an un-edited version, to aid with comparison), in order to enable members to consider the various options for changes to the principles.
- 6.2 A range of feedback has been received and it is important to remember that the original set of principles, while designed in a different context before the referendum, came from an extremely well-evidenced select-committee style exercise. The proposed changes to the document are intended to strike a path which balances all of the inputs into the design process so far, but in general with a lean towards inclusion of recent suggestions, in light of the time passed since the principles were first authored.

7.0 LEGAL, FINANCIAL AND EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no immediate legal implications to this report.
- 7.2 While a new proposal has been made to include a principle about cost neutrality of the new system, a decision to include this in the list of principles would not, at this stage, have direct financial implications for the authority.
- 7.3 There are no immediate equalities implications to this report. Equalities will be a key consideration in the design and implementation of the engagement programme, the detail of which will return to the October meeting of this committee for agreement. As per section 4.3 above, the Council is committed to ensuring that the development of our governance is inclusive, with involvement from all communities and Sheffielders with protected characteristics, and these views will feed directly into the design of the new governance model. An Equality Impact Assessment is underway and will be kept under review as part of the engagement work.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *That the feedback from members of the public and stakeholders (Appendix 1) be noted;*
2. *That the draft design principles be amended in light of this feedback, as per Appendix 2 subject to any alterations agreed; and*
3. *That these design principles, as amended, continue to be used for the purpose of guiding the design, and future review, of Sheffield's modern committee governance model, subject to any further review in the course of ongoing public engagement.*

9.0 APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Summary of feedback received during the public stakeholder engagement work so far which is either implicitly or explicitly about the draft design principles

Appendix 2 – Options for amendments to the design principles, incorporating this feedback

Gillian Duckworth
Director of Legal & Governance (and Monitoring Officer)

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