Supplementary Appendix - Design Principles (further amended)

Committee Members' initial feedback following the publication of Appendix 2 on 22 November was that the review of principles had not gone far enough, insofar as the language and sentences were considered to be overcomplicated, full of jargon and not ideal for use with the general public.

In response to this, one of the four break-out sessions at the public and stakeholder engagement event on 24 November was focused specifically on gaining input from those present about the language, style, length, tone etc of the principles. During this session the intended meaning of the statements was not the subject of discussion, it was all about presentation and clarity.

The feedback from those sessions has helped to address members' wishes to see a significantly simpler and better worded document. The proposed re-draft is below.

Design Principles

In May 2022 Sheffield City Council is changing the way decisions are made. The new way of doing things is called a committee system.

This is a list of 'design principles' which were agreed by Councillors when they were planning for this change. The principles say how the council would like to make decisions in future.

Councillors have agreed to keep these principles in mind when they design the new committee system. Then, once it is in place, they have agreed to use these principles to check how well it is working.

The top five principles

When it comes to the way it makes decisions, Sheffield City Council aims to…

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

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

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

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

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

The new committee system…

1. …should not be over-complicated, or costly.

2. …should make it easy to know what decisions will be made, and when.

3. …should make it easy to know what decisions have been made and why (and what they mean).

4. …should show the evidence for decisions, and what options were considered.

5. …should seek out and listen to voices from across the city, valuing them all equally.

6. …should show how councillors took people's views into account when they made each decision.

7. …should make it easier for people to find information about how the City works, and how they can get something done through the Council.

8. …should make it clear who is allowed to decide what, and why they have that power.

9. …should hold decision-makers to account.

10. …should have high expectations of Councillors' behaviour.

11. …should make sure people in each part of the system know what's happening in the other parts, and that they all work together.

12. …should help the Council work well with others locally and nationally.

13. …should help Councillors from all parties to find the things they can agree on, and not let disagreements become blockages.

14. …should include Full Council meetings which are time well spent.

15. …should allow urgent decisions to happen quickly, without having to compromise on the other things in this list.

16. …should allow councillors to balance their time between local work, formal meetings and their own careers and families

17. …should include support and training for councillors.

Engagement principles

When we are engaging with people through this process, we will value:

18. **Transparency** - we will communicate in a way that easy for everyone to understand

19. **Diversity** – We will consider everyone's backgrounds, interests and needs

20. **Inclusive participation** – We will provide lots of opportunities for people to get involved in a way that suits them

21. **Equality** – Everyone's ideas will be equally encouraged and treated with respect

22. **Responsiveness** – We will listen, and use what we hear to help us take decisions

The feedback

Notes from the public and stakeholders workshops on 24 November (on zoom) about the wording of the previously published draft design principles (Appendix 2 of item 7 on 30 November Governance Committee agenda):

General comments on previous principles (before the above revisions):
- The language is not fit for purpose.
- Make sentences shorter
- Reduce the Design Principle to two words, embolden them and have the rest of the wording as a hyphen
- Remove the word 'governance' where ever possible. It doesn't mean anything. Instead say 'the way we do things' / 'the way we run things.'
- Remove the word 'partners'. Instead say that we will work together.
- Highlight all buzz words – governance, partners, complex, policy environment, citizen – and then remove them all!
- Use the word citizen rather than people
- Remove all acronyms e.g. VCS
- The design principles are very theoretical, they are "Grand, theoretical, abstract principles."
- It would be a good idea to think of a practical case study and apply the principles. Take a specific real life case and see how you could influence that case, for example, road changes – plans and proposals are presented (where do they come from?) and the question is are these good or bad. There is no scope to make an alternative suggestion.

- A general comment was made that it is only a certain type of person who reads information like this. For other people, they have no interest in this type of material. Simplifying the language used is a good thing though it could be simplified too far and merely simplifying does not make it more interesting.

Comments about specific principles:

- Design principle 4 – this is more detailed than the other principles.
- Design principle 4 – suggested that wording is incorporated, "key element of information highway."
- Design principle 4 – picked up on the word 'recommendations'. In officer reports there is always a statement that 'no alternative options have been considered'. This seems unbelievable, other thoughts and options must be considered.
- People need to know that decisions are made with clear information and real options.
- Design principle 4 – suggestion that at the end additional wording is added, 'a proposal has been made, other options have been considered.'
- Design principle 9 – we must ensure that decision making does not exclude anyone because of work commitments etc.
- Design principle 10 – need to add: 'Our decision-making arrangements should increase the connections and safeguard positive relationships with local people, communities and partners, underpinned by effective ways of working in localities (such as Local Area Committees) and by recognition of the role of the VCS, partners and stakeholders in representing key groups, networks and communities [ADD: and all residents and communities of the city,] all of whose voices are equally valued. These arrangements should work effectively alongside, and feed into, citywide decision-making processes.
- The flow of information from the Council to the community is "Curtailed by consultation."
- Public facing communication information is not broad or detailed enough. Clearer routes to get information are needed on the Council website, such as 'News and Consultations' and 'New things that are happening in Sheffield.'