Appendix 2

**Summary of review EIA 1153 – Sheffield's Committee System
To inform the wider Governance Review**

About this paper:
- EIA 1153 was written to consider the equality implications of the introduction of Sheffield's new committee structure
- It has been kept under review during the early stages of the committees
- This summary paper reflects a review of the EIA, set against its original assessment and the emerging conclusions of the Governance Review
- The shortened summary nature of this paper acknowledges the need for accessible information, which is an issue the Governance Review itself identifies

This paper considers the main themes identified and anticipated by the EIA, whether these remain issues and to what extent actions identified through the Governance Review are expected to address them.

Conclusions of the EIA review:

- The EIA review has concluded that almost every issue identified in the original EIA is either being addressed through actions identified in the Governance Review Implementation Plan or is no longer a concern.

- The exceptions and recommendations of this EIA review are that:

  1. As part of the work to look into the accessibility of the Town Hall, alternative rooms could be considered.

  2. The EIA identified potential impacts of long meetings without breaks. This should be reaffirmed through any training for Chairs.

- The EIA needs to continue to be monitored closely.

Public engagement

Broad intentions were set out to promote:

Transparency (including providing and enabling accessible and understandable information and decision-making)

Comment:
- This is being addressed through Governance Review Implementation Plan (GRIP) actions to 'Consider how we can make it easier for citizens to know what is happening in Policy Committees and how they can get involved.'
- In addition, Policy Committee meetings are webcast.

Diversity & Equality (taking account of the wide range of people's protected characteristics, socio-economic backgrounds, values and skills, and so that no sections of the community are left out)

Comment:
- The Governance Review identified inconsistent use of Equality Impact Assessments in Policy Committee decision-making and has set an action to 'Ensure the impact assessment process is robust, transparent and applied consistently.'
- This is being taken forward through an EIA improvement plan to address EIA accessibility, quality consistency by introducing an EIA on-line platform, training and guidance.
- The Governance Review also identified the need to provide guidance for officers to get sign-off for impact assessments to enable timely publication of reports.
- Governance Committee will be carrying out a task and finish group to look at how improve citizen engagement and involvement. It will take learning from the reports of Sheffield Race Equality Commission, the LGA Peer Challenge and Involve.

Inclusive participation (including scheduling meetings conveniently and providing parallel ways for people to take part)

Comment:
- The rules of decision-making and technical considerations around hybrid arrangements restrict participation opportunities to in-person meetings.
- 42% of respondents in the Governance Review said that meeting locations were a problem. The GRIP has identified actions to consider the accessibility of the Town Hall through the assessment of AccessAble and to 'Consider options for virtual attendance.'
- Public feedback also included comments that the formality of meeting environments could be intimidating (which could potentially inhibit involvement). **As part of the work to look into the accessibility of the Town Hall, alternative rooms could be considered.**
- Further GRIP actions identified are concerned with making the public questions process clearer and more accessible.
- It has not been possible or practical to get information about the profile or range of people seeking to be involved in Committee meetings. Requesting demographic of people attending Policy Committee meetings has not been considered reasonable. There is no mechanism for obtaining such information from people viewing on-line.
- The Governance Review acknowledges that the transition to Committees has not yet delivered on engaging with communities. Actions are planned through the GRIP and the Governance Committee's work programme over the next year to address this.
- Other GRIP actions address the need to improve the length and readability of reports, and to use accessible language; and to publish reports on time (late publication reduced people's ability to engage with the work of the Policy

Committees). Further actions cover clarifying the areas of work covered by each Committees and how the public can get involved, in recognition that it can be hard find information on the website.

- And there are additional actions to make the process of submitting public questions clearer and more accessible. Mechanisms exist for responding to public questions submitted in different languages or formats.
- No issues were raised through the Governance Review about the conduct of meetings (which may affect participation).

Geographical impact

Comment:
- This consideration applies more to Local Area Committees, which are out of scope of the Governance Review.
- As above, no demographic information is obtained about people participating or viewing.

Meeting arrangements

The original EIA considered whether the mechanics of meetings could have any impacts:

Time spent on Policy Committees (and impact on work outside of meetings, managing workloads and work/life balance)

Comment:
- Actions being taken forward in the GRIP relate to workload and preparation time, ensuring that papers are published on time and in an accessible format. This is also aimed to ensure meetings are scheduled to enable Members to plan and prepare.
- The Review did not identify any concerns about current meeting lengths.
- **The EIA identified potential impacts of long meetings without breaks. This should be reaffirmed through any training for Chairs.**

Member workload and support

Comment:
- The GRIP has identified various actions, including concerning the Chair and Co-Chairing roles and support for Members through the use of job-share. The Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee Chair role has recently been granted a Special Responsibility Allowance.
- The GRIP is developing guidance on expectations on Members and officers about briefings. This supports the principle of Member development, and therefore diversity of Members, something taken forward in the Governance Committee.
- There is an annual programme of Member training and induction.

- The Review has reaffirmed the option for Members to receive health and wellbeing support through PAM Assist.
- Members also have access to reasonable adjustments – (e.g. some Members may request hard copies of papers) and there is further support Members' business partner support available for IT.

Remote working (including accessibility, adjustments, time for breaks)

Comment:
- Since the development of the original EIA, the Council has continued to develop its approach to remote-working, including hybrid-working. This overarching approach to embed working practices, together with HR processes and support, helps to meet risks and impacts associated with remote-working and Committee meetings.
- In practical terms, this is more of an issue for briefings and informal Committee work that Members may access remotely. Formal Committee meetings are required to be in-person.

Partner engagement (in Committee meetings or in pre-engagement)

Comment:
- Links that existed under the Cabinet model have continued.
- Engagement has been taking place (e.g. with business advisers in the Economic Development & Skill Policy Committee) and there was no feedback in the Governance Review suggesting this was a problem
- Governance Committee work to look at citizen and stakeholder engagement will take place over the next year, reflecting on the learning from partners involved in Sheffield Race Equality Commission and other reports.