Sheffield City Council

Report to Governance Committee

12th October 2023

Report of: Director of Policy and Democratic Engagement

Subject: GRIP – Governance Review Implementation Plan update

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Summary:

Governance Committee agreed that it was appropriate for action to begin immediately to address issues arising from the six-month Governance Review. This was presented to Full Council in May 2023 as part of the Annual General Meeting and Governance Committee received an update at its meeting in July 2023.

This update includes a short summary of the key achievements from the Governance Review Implementation Plan (GRIP) along with the detailed spreadsheet in Appendix 1.

Recommendations:

1. That the Committee note the progress against actions in the Governance Review Implementation Plan.

Background Papers: None

Category of Report: Open

Governance Review Implementation Plan update

1. In the Six Month Review of Governance, Full Council approved the Governance Review Implementation Plan (GRIP) which predominantly comprises of practical, officer-led actions to improve the function of our committee system. Along with practical actions, there are a number of items which are work in progress as they are part of the Governance Committee's workplan for this year (eg. democratic participation).

2. Governance Committee agreed to receive regular updates on the delivery of the actions in the GRIP and where appropriate, to receive and consider draft content (eg. draft guidance to support the committee system).

3. To help bring to life the material in the GRIP itself, the below summarises the key achievements from the GRIP to date along with actions we still need to complete.

Improving how we explain the system

This was a critical part of the Governance Review and focused on how we better enable Members, citizens and officers in SCC to navigate the system and support committees to be effective in their role.

What we've done

- Rebranded and reformatted the democracy area of the SCC website to make it cleaner and easier to navigate for anyone trying to find dates or content for Committee meetings.
  See: https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/mgListCommittees.aspx?bcr=1

- Undertaken initial work to improve citizen involvement in our committees through a deep dive into public questions and petitions with citizens and stakeholders (interim findings on Governance Committee, 12th October).

- Re-instated the Member Development Working Group to support Member learning and development. This has included work to improve the role profiles of Members within the Committee System.

What we still need to do

- Develop and implement improvement to Public Questions with citizens and officers, learning from the recent engagement activity

- Continue to improve the accessibility of our Committee meetings both in terms of physical and online access, working with the Sheffield Equality Partnership network. This includes further testing hybrid technology for meetings and using less formal places in the Town Hall for committee meetings.

Improving the support we provide to those working in the system

What we've done

- Provided support and signposting to wellbeing advice and support for Members through the internal Member Newsletters

- Updated internal approaches to Policy Committee workplans so that the overall set of workplans are regularly discussed by Committee Chairs and the Senior Leadership Team to ensure we better manage cross-cutting issues and support cross-committee working.

- Improved briefing guidance available to officers, particularly to support clearer work planning and support better committee system oversight by the S&R Committee

- Created a SharePoint portal to support officers to better navigate the Committee System. This will include access to guidance on work planning, briefings, decision and policy report templates, and guidance on key impact assessments (EIAs, CIAs).

- Achieved a consistent increase in the number of EIAs being completed and published with reports, ensuring we are evidencing any implications for people in Sheffield and appropriate mitigations.

What we still need to do

- We need to develop the skills of our officers to improve the quality and consistency of reports being presented to committees. We are working with our HR Team to develop the learning and development needed.

- Make it easier for officers to develop and get reports completed and published on time using the Mod.Gov app.

- Finalise a new policy toolkit to support officers engaging Committees in policy development.

Supporting development of our governance beyond the Six Month Review

What we've done

- Implemented Member Questions at Policy Committees, building on the established approach used at Full Council

- Introduced a proactive work planning approach for Full Council meetings, working cross-party with Whips

- Introduced new word limits on Notices of Motion at ordinary meetings of Full Council

What we still need to do

- Review the remits of Policy Committees and the associated relationship with Local Area Committees (part of the Governance Committee's work plan for this year)

- Support the improvement of democratic participation in the Committee System, complementing the work in the Future Sheffield programme to transform our approach to citizen engagement at SCC.

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