



## Report to Governance Committee

### Author/Lead Officer of Report:

Laurie Brennan, Head of Policy & Partnerships

Tel: 0114 2734755

**Report of:** Director of Policy and Democratic Engagement

**Report to:** Governance Committee

**Date of Decision:** 14<sup>th</sup> December 2023

**Subject:** Review of Policy Committee Remits

Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) been undertaken?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If YES, what EIA reference number has it been given?				
Has appropriate consultation taken place?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has a Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) been undertaken?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### Purpose of Report:

This paper proposes an initial scope and approach to undertaking a review of Policy Committee remits in line with the recommendations of the Six Month Review of New Governance Arrangements that was approved by Full Council in May 2023.

It is proposed that Governance Committee establish a new task and finish group which will start meeting in January 2024 lead the review over the course of 2024.

### Recommendations:

That Governance Committee:

1. Discuss and agree the initial scope for the review of Policy Committee remits in line with the recommendations of the Six Month Review of Governance Arrangements
2. Agree to establish a dedicated Task and Finish Group to lead the review of Policy Committee remits from January 2024
3. Agree the composition of the proposed Task and Finish Group

4. Agree to receive regular progress reports and developing propositions from the Task and Finish group over the course of the review.

**Background Papers:**

Six Month Review of New Governance Arrangements,

<https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/documents/b27181/Item%207%20-%20Six%20Month%20Review%20of%20Governance%20Arrangements%20-%20report%20Wednesday%2017-May-2023%2011.30%20Council.pdf?T=9>

Lead Officer to complete:-					
1	<p>I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed, where required.</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Finance: Matthew Ardern, Senior Finance Manager</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Legal: David Hollis, General Counsel</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Equalities &amp; Consultation: Ed Sexton, Senior Equalities and Engagement Officer</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Climate: Laura Ellendale,</td> </tr> </table>	Finance: Matthew Ardern, Senior Finance Manager	Legal: David Hollis, General Counsel	Equalities & Consultation: Ed Sexton, Senior Equalities and Engagement Officer	Climate: Laura Ellendale,
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Legal: David Hollis, General Counsel					
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Climate: Laura Ellendale,					
	<i>Legal, financial/commercial and equalities implications must be included within the report and the name of the officer consulted must be included above.</i>				
2	<p><b>SLB member who approved submission:</b></p> <p>James Henderson, Director of Policy and Democratic Engagement</p>				
3	<p><b>Committee Chair consulted:</b></p> <p>Cllr. Fran Belbin, Chair of Governance Committee</p>				
4	<p>I confirm that all necessary approval has been obtained in respect of the implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist and that the report has been approved for submission to the Committee by the SLB member indicated at 2. In addition, any additional forms have been completed and signed off as required at 1.</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td><b>Lead Officer Name:</b> Laurie Brennan</td> <td><b>Job Title:</b> Head of Policy and Partnerships</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2"><b>Date:</b> 6<sup>th</sup> December 2023</td> </tr> </table>	<b>Lead Officer Name:</b> Laurie Brennan	<b>Job Title:</b> Head of Policy and Partnerships	<b>Date:</b> 6 <sup>th</sup> December 2023	
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<b>Date:</b> 6 <sup>th</sup> December 2023					

# Review of Policy Committee Remits

## 1. Purpose

- 1.1 This paper sets out a proposed approach to the review of the remits of the Policy Committee in Sheffield City Council's committee system. The review responds to a commitment made in the Six Month Review of Governance Arrangements to undertake a review of remits in 2023/24.
- 1.2 The proposal suggests an initial scope for the review, including key issues to explore and options for how the Governance Committee may want to work.

## 2. Holistic review of Committee Remits – suggested scope

- 2.1 In May 2022, Sheffield City Council implemented a modern committee system of governance following a referendum in May 2021. This included establishing a number of Policy Committees to discharge the functions delegated to them by Full Council (as set out in Part 3 of the Constitution<sup>1</sup>). While the current policy committees are largely aligned to broad functions of the Council, the responsibilities of the Policy Committees fall into three key areas:
  - Policy development
  - Decision making
  - Policy review
- 2.2 To support the continuous improvement of our new committee system, the Governance Committee was asked to undertake a Six Month Review of Governance<sup>2</sup>, in 2022/23. In the Review, the Governance Committee made a series of recommendations and agreed a number of officer actions which have been progressed during the 2023/24 municipal year. However, apart from some specific amendments (eg. to remit of Education, Children and Families Committee), the Committee recognised that with the Committee System in relative infancy, it was minded to enable the Policy Committees to bed-in further before evaluating the effectiveness policy responsibilities across the system.
- 2.3 The Six Month Review report stated:

“Governance Committee will take a holistic approach to reviewing Committee remits over 2023/24, taking into account the impact of this review’s

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<sup>1</sup> Sheffield City Council (2023) *Constitution* (Sept 2023), <https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/documents/s64413/Part%203C%20-%203.3%20Matters%20Delegated%20to%20Committees%20Sept%202023.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Sheffield City Council (2023) *Six Month Review of New Governance Arrangements*, <https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/documents/s58717/Appendix%201%20Report%20and%20Recommendations.pdf>

recommendations, any changes that may develop through the development of Local Area Committees and changes to the Council's management structure".

- 2.3 In line with the workplan agreed by Governance Committee, it is proposed that the Committee undertake the review of Policy Committee remits, starting in January 2024. Given that this is a holistic review, it is likely that the work will run beyond the 2023/24 municipal year although any early-stage recommendations from the work may be proposed to Full Council as part of the AGM in May to support the continuous improvement of the governance system.

Suggested initial key lines of enquiry

- 2.4 Learning from the insight and evidence provided by Members, officers and citizens as part of the Six-Month Review, it is proposed that the initial scope of the remits review focuses on a number of key areas:

- Workloads of each committee
- The number of times each committee has met
- Review the key responsibilities of the Policy Committees and considering whether they are being delivered effectively, specifically thinking about the following areas and the relative balance of focus given to each:
  - Policy review and scrutiny
  - Policy development
  - Decision making
- Alignment to the strategic context – including supporting the delivery of the new Council Plan and new Equalities Framework
- How cross-cutting matters have been managed and allocated, including leadership on equality, diversity and inclusion and responding to the climate emergency.
- The role of Finance Committee
- Any anomalies in remits – e.g. issues that have fallen between committees, gaps, areas that need greater clarity
- Whether the remits between committees should be changed
- The balance of decision making between LACs and policy committees and the relationships between LACs and policy committees

- 2.5 The scope will undoubtedly iterate as the review develops and Members may want to consider prioritising some areas to review first or starting with a broad assessment of the Policy Committees before focusing in on specific issues or themes which need more detailed analysis.

- 2.6 It is also suggested that the review makes full use of existing data and insight available about the Policy Committees. This includes insight and analysis

from the Six Month Review, including Member, citizen and officer insight into policy committees and data collected on operation of policy committees (eg. frequency, attendance, meeting length etc).

### 3. **Approach to undertaking the review**

3.1 It is proposed that Governance Committee establish a cross-party task and finish group to lead the remits review on behalf of the Governance Committee. This could be with a small group of Members from the Committee or Members may wish to operate as a full committee (as the Committee did in the Six Month Review of Governance), drawing on the whole Committee's expertise and sharing the workload.

3.2 Considering the scope of the review and potential duration, operating as a Task and Finish group with the full Committee involvement may ensure that we retain focus and a core group of Member involvement beyond the local elections and into the new municipal year.

3.3 The approach to undertaking the review is for the Members of the task and finish group to discuss and agree but it is recommended that the following should be considered:

- Analysis of existing evidence (eg. from the Six Month Review)
- Reflection on the original design principles for the Committee System and the Constitutional responsibilities of Policy Committee
- Involvement and engagement of citizens, Members and officers in the review, both in assessing the existing and in developing recommendations
- Views of strategic partners and external organisations – including business and city anchor institutions (eg. NHS) and delivery partners.

3.4 It is suggested that the new Task and Finish Group meet early in 2024 to agree ways of working and agree a detailed scope and workplan for the review which will then be presented at the next Governance Committee.

### 4. **How does this decision contribute?**

4.1 Undertaking the proposed review of Policy Committee remits delivers on the recommendations of the Six Month Review of Governance Arrangements as approved by Full Council in May 2023. It will ensure that our Policy Committees are undertaking their roles effectively and are able to lead key policy areas in line with the ambitions and strategic outcomes in the draft Council Plan.

- 4.2 The review will ensure that we support the continuous improvement of the committee system, recognising the need to learn from the experience of Members, officers and citizens in how the Policy Committees have functioned to date and considering how Policy Committees can best focus support the delivery of the draft Council Plan.

## 5. **Has there been any consultation?**

- 5.1 The Six Month Review included a period of engagement as part of the evidence gathering activity. This included Members, officer and some (although limited) citizen perspectives. It is suggested that the Committee's Task and Finish should draw on the insight from the Six Month Review but also look to undertake further engagement as part of the review.

This is for the Task and Finish Group to define as part of the scoping of the review.

## 6. **Risk analysis and implications of the decision**

### 6.1 Equality Implications

- 6.1.1 A full EIA was undertaken to inform the Transition to Committees work and the later Six Month Review of Governance. The EIA to date has focused on the accessibility and practicalities of Policy Committee meeting arrangements rather than the remit but the proposed remit review would provide an opportunity to consider any wider equality issues. There are other important insights from the Review of Governance which should be considered by the Task and Finish Group as part of the remit review.

- 6.1.2 The remit review should also consider the draft Equalities Framework and review how Policy Committees are undertaking their EDI duties as part of the scope.

### 6.2 Financial and Commercial Implications

- 6.2.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. The implications of any proposed changes to committee remits will be considered and any proposals put forward by the Governance Committee, where needed, must be costed prior to implementation.

### 6.3 Legal Implications

- 6.3.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report. The implications of any proposed changes to committee remits will be considered and any proposals put forward by the Governance Committee must be approved by Full Council as changes to the Constitution.

- 6.4 Climate Implications
- 6.4.1 There are no climate implications arising directly from this report and a CIA is not appropriate to be carried out at this stage, however there are important insights in the Six Month Review of Governance which should be considered by the Task and Finish group as part of the remit review.
- 6.4.2 “Six Month Review of New Governance Arrangements” 3.2.3 stated that “The engagement highlighted imbalances in Committee remits – with some Committees, particularly Transport, Regeneration and Climate Change having particularly heavy workloads. Governance Committee is not minded to recommend changes to the current remits at this point, seeing the advantage to letting the Committee System ‘bed-in’ further. Governance Committee will take a holistic approach to reviewing Committee remits over 2023/24, taking into account the impact of this review’s recommendations, any changes that may develop through the development of Local Area Committees and changes to the Council’s management structure”
- 6.4.3 Appendix 1 ‘Engagement Findings extracted from report to governance committee 9<sup>th</sup> February 2023” further clarified that “Members and officers were clear that the current Policy Committee remits are unbalanced – with some having overly large remits. This was most often mentioned in relation to the Transport, Regeneration and Climate Change (TRCC) Policy Committee, where people told us that too much agenda time is spent on local and operational transport issues, leaving inadequate time for the Committee to consider important strategic and policy issues – including Climate Change”.
- 6.4.4 It is stated in the Sheffield City Council Constitution of 6 Sep 2023 under the council functions of each policy committee that ‘when devising policy, evaluating service delivery and taking decisions the committee must consider...climate and biodiversity’. The work of each of our committees are impacted by the climate emergency, and affected by other committees’ decisions, and we will only succeed if we take a cross-committee approach to climate action.
- 6.4.5 Any proposals put forward by the Governance Committee, where needed, should consider the implications of any proposed changes to committee remits to delivering our climate commitments, as set out in “Our Statement of Climate Commitments” at Strategy and Resources Committee on the 13<sup>th</sup> December 2023<sup>3</sup>, and should be considered for both individual affected committees and the council as a whole.

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<sup>3</sup> Sheffield City Council (2023) *Committee Climate Statements*, [https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/documents/s64879/12%20-%2020231204\\_Composite%20of%20Committee%20Climate%20Statements%20-%20V1.0%20Final.pdf](https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/documents/s64879/12%20-%2020231204_Composite%20of%20Committee%20Climate%20Statements%20-%20V1.0%20Final.pdf)

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