



Report to Policy Committee

Author/Lead Officer of Report:

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Report of: Director of Policy and Democratic Engagement
Report to: Governance Committee
Date of Decision: 11th July 2024
Subject: **Community Engagement Update
(Governance Committee Public Involvement
Working Group)**

Type of Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) undertaken Initial Full

Insert EIA reference number and attach EIA: 2608

Has appropriate consultation/engagement taken place? Yes No

Has a Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) been undertaken? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

If YES, give details as to whether the exemption applies to the full report / part of the report and/or appendices and complete below:-

*“The (**report/appendix**) is not for publication because it contains exempt information under Paragraph (**insert relevant paragraph number**) of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).”*

Purpose of Report:

The Governance Committee agreed in 2023/2024 to establish a Public Involvement Working Group. The springboard for this was a report from Involve which had clear recommendations for how the Council could improve its practice

and approach to community involvement. Governance Committee considered the Involve report November 2023.

This report summarises progress to date and provides an update to Governance Committee on the next steps in 2024, including the need to refresh the membership of our Public Involvement Working Group following the May local elections.

Recommendations

That Governance Committee:

1. Notes the ongoing progress on the Council's approach to community engagement.
2. Nominates and agrees the refreshed membership for the Public Involvement Working Group for the forthcoming municipal year
3. Consider the proposed public involvement conference to develop a vision, grow and enhance our existing engagement and participation practice.

Background Papers:

[Agenda for Governance Committee on Wednesday 22 November 2023, 10.00 am | Sheffield City Council](#)

[Agenda for Governance Committee on Thursday 14 December 2023, 2.00 pm | Sheffield City Council](#)

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.</p> <p>Finance: Paul Foster, Finance Manager</p> <p>Legal: Andrea Simpson, Corporate Governance Lawyer</p> <p>Equalities & Consultation: Ed Sexton, Senior Equalities and Engagement Officer</p> <p>Climate: N/A</p>
	<p><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></p>
2	<p>SLB member who approved submission:</p> <p>James Henderson, Director of Policy and Democratic Engagement</p>

3	Committee Chair consulted:	Cllr. Fran Belbin, Chair of Governance Committee
4	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.	
Lead Officer Name: Laurie Brennan		Job Title: Head of Policy and Partnerships
Date: 3 rd July 2024		

1 Together we get things done: working together and engaging communities is our council mission

1.1 In our [Council Plan](#), we said that our mission is ‘**together we get things done**’. This mission is a whole organisation commitment to work with citizens, communities, stakeholders and partners to get things done and to listen, involve, collaborate with others in how we work. But, in the Council Plan, and building on the learning from the [Governance Committee-led work with Involve](#) on engagement, we know that we need to develop a new, comprehensive vision and approach to engaging citizens to help us listen and work together with communities. We committed in the Council Plan to take:

A new approach to community empowerment and engagement, working with our Voluntary, Community and Faith sector partners and through LACs

We will work with communities on new ways to build engagement into the way we work so that we listen better and work together to find shared solutions. We will also develop new approaches to community development, working differently with our Voluntary, Community and Faith sector partners in ways that support and value their unique role, and build on the progress made with Local Area Committees (LACs) in developing our work in places and with communities.

1.2 Through our Future Sheffield programme, we are on a journey to become a customer and community-focused, digital council and have recently agreed our new [Customer Experience Strategy](#) and our [Digital Strategy](#). A strong and consistent approach to engagement is central to making a success of the Future Sheffield work on Customer Experience. Excellent, effective citizen engagement is a vital tool in developing the intelligence we need to design and deliver effective services that meet people’s needs, and to help shape places that are great for people to live in. A strong approach to engagement provides a key interface between the Council and Sheffielders, helping us to build understanding and trust.

1.3 Recognising that we need to deliver a step change, the Involve report was instructive for us in setting out what we need to do:

1. Develop a vision for engagement/participation and a plan to embed that vision in working culture across the Council
2. Develop, grow and enhance existing engagement and participation practice.

1.4 Governance Committee are taking a leading role in working with stakeholders and harnessing expertise in the city to set out a long-term vision and plan to embed that vision in SCC (ie. Delivering the first of Involve’s recommendations). This in turn will help grow and enhance our approach to engagement across the whole council, ensuring that we continuously strive to live by our Council Plan mission and be a customer-focused organisation.

1.5 But, we need to take some immediate action to get the basics right and set out some core standards which officers should adhere to in any engagement activity across the organisation. This is intended to rebuild and strengthen the organisation’s capability to undertake engagement activity to a consistent

standard in the immediate term, supporting our Customer Experience Strategy and providing some essential practical guidance to guide officers in every part of the council.

- 1.6 It is intended that a set of 'Foundations for Good Engagement' will be proposed to Strategy and Resources Committee in July 2024, creating a clear statement of the expectations that we have as a council for consistent, core standards of practice that should shape any engagement activity we undertake.
- 1.7 As part of the paper in July, S&R will be asked to recognise the journey we are on as an organisation and that in the medium-term, we want to be a council that is known for excellence and innovative practice in engagement. The paper will reinforce and welcome Governance Committee's leadership on the development of our vision and longer-term plan for community engagement and welcome the collaborative, cross-party working group activity that the Committee have established.

Public Involvement Working Group activity

- 2.1 In December 2023, Governance Committee agreed to establish a cross—party working group to lead the council's development of an ambitious vision for community engagement. The Chair of the Committee wrote out to a range of stakeholders and partners in the city to join the working group, ensuring that the vision is collaborative and draws on the experience and expertise of our city.
- 2.2 The working group had its first meeting in March 2024, to start the discussions and work on the Involve report and focused on:
 - addressing challenges that we face in citizen engagement;
 - our response as a city; and
 - ensuring that we involve the whole city in the work.

Next steps – refreshing the membership of the working group

- 3.1 The intention has always been that the working group operates collaboratively, aims to bring in external voices, and co-produce work to develop a vision for engagement, to grow and enhance existing engagement practice.
- 3.2 The working group has established cross-party representation but following the local elections in May 2024, we need to update the Member representation on the working group.
- 3.3 Group spokespeople from each Group on Governance Committee are asked to confirm nominations for the working group for the coming municipal year.

Next steps – proposed community engagement conference

- 4.1 When the Working Group met in March this year, the group proposed that a community engagement conference would be a valuable step in building a collaborative approach to developing a vision. It was suggested that this could include Elected Members and officers, stakeholders, community organisations and partners.
- 4.2 It is proposed that a Governance Committee agree that a small planning group of Members, officers and stakeholders (drawn from the Working Group) should be asked to lead the work the conference, ensuring that there is a clear purpose, approach and inclusive proposed invite list.
- 4.3 It is proposed that the conference could be held in September, potentially using the scheduled Governance Committee (5th Sept) as the timing for the conference. But, this clearly will need some rapid planning activity over the coming weeks.

Risk analysis and implications of the decision

Equality Implications

- 5.1 Under the Equalities Act 2010, s149, the authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
 - eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is connected to protected characteristics and prohibited by or under this Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not;
 - foster good relations between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 5.2 The way the authority promotes, supports and enables citizen participation and community involvement influences the way the above Duty is met. For example, some considerations in relation to the need to advance equality of opportunity are:
 - **Who is participating and being involved** – to what extent does the authority reach and encourage engagement with so-called ‘seldom heard’ groups? How representative and diverse is this currently? Are appropriate mechanisms consistently used to encourage diverse participation and involvement, (e.g. adjustments, financial, etc)?
 - **How participation and involvement take place** – what engagement mechanisms are we encouraging? How accessible, available and appealing are these mechanisms to geographical communities and communities of interest? Are these enabling engagement that is community-led as well as authority-led?

- **When participation and involvement take place** – are we enabling early engagement that might empower communities to help identify issues and solutions? Are we giving people enough time to meaningfully participate and be involved? Are we over-relying on informing people of our plans or consulting on our own ideas rather than jointly developing proposals with communities?

- 5.3 Equality, diversity and inclusion is one of the primary drivers for the approach that is proposed above – ie. to ensure that people from all backgrounds in Sheffield can participate and get involved in the opportunities and issues that matter to them. There is clear evidence in the Race Equality Commission report that we have to do more to make sure that all communities in Sheffield can participate, contribute and play an active role in the city.
- 5.4 There are EDI implications from this report. The resulting change in ambition and practice must enable and support greater participation from different communities in the city. A full EIA to support the developing programme of activity will be produced.

Financial and Commercial Implications

- 5.5 The recommendations in this report will be undertaken within existing resources. Activity to implement the recommendations will be prioritised factoring in organisational capacity.

Legal Implications

- 5.6 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

Climate Implications

- 5.7 There are no climate implications arising directly from this report

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