



Report to Governance Committee

11th July 2024

Report of: Head of Policy and Partnerships / Head of Democratic Services

Subject: **Reviewing our Policy Committee Remits: Governance Committee Work Plan**

Author of Report: Alice Nicholson, Policy & Improvement Officer

Type of Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) undertaken Initial Full

Insert EIA reference number: EIA 1153 (Modern Committee System)

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*“The (**report/appendix**) is not for publication because it contains exempt information under Paragraph (**insert relevant paragraph number**) of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).”*

Summary:

The Governance Committee 2023/24 agreed to undertake a review of our Policy Committee Remits in line with the six-month review of our then newly established Committee decision making structure.

The purpose of the review to ensure the remits of our Policy Committees are supporting our decision making and strategic ambitions, two years on from their establishment.

This update report sets out the progress of the review process and seeks agreement to the proposed work plan, see Appendix 1 slidepack.

Recommendations:

1. That the Committee consider and agree the proposed work plan, Appendix 1, for the Governance Committee Review of Policy Committee Remits.

Background Papers: None

Category of Report: Open

Lead Officer to complete:-		
1	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.	Finance: Paul Foster, Finance
		Legal: Andrea Simpson, Corporate Governance Lawyer
		Equalities & Consultation: Ed Sexton, Senior Equalities and Engagement Officer
		Climate:
	<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	SLB member who approved submission:	James Henderson, Director of Policy and Democratic Engagement
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: Jason Dietsch	Job Title: Head of Democratic Services
Date: 3 July 2024	

Reviewing our Policy Committee Remits

1 Background and Introduction

1.1 In May 2022, we implemented a modern committee system of governance. This included establishing Policy Committees to discharge the functions delegated to them by Full Council (as set out in Part 3 of the Constitution). 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. We reviewed the new committee system after six months but recognised that the committees needed more time to bed-in before reviewing remits.

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

2 The Review Process

2.1 Scope

2.1.1 The committee previously agreed three areas of focus for reviewing the remits:

1. **Alignment to strategic ambitions** – what should the Policy Committee alignment and arrangements be to best deliver the Council Plan and our strategic outcomes; to provide leadership of complex cross-cutting policy areas, to consider ambition and vision for our committee model.
2. **Delivering Policy Committee responsibilities effectively** – getting the balance between policy development, decisions and review; relative workloads of committees; decisions being made at the right level, in the right place; the balance in policy committee and local area committee relationship.
3. **Improving, clarifying and simplifying policy responsibilities** – identifying and resolving specific issues and anomalies; clarity of roles of

specific committees; gaps; issues that fall between multiple policy committees; constitutional issues and procedure rules.

2.2 Governance Committee activity to date

- 2.2.1 The Committee established a task and finish group which has met to scope out the review and early areas of work activity.
- 2.2.2 Working with Members of the Finance Committee, it was agreed that because of specific concerns about the narrow scope of that committee, this should be an early priority for the work, and as such has been identified as a separate workstream. The committee will be asked to consider these issues under another item on the agenda for this meeting. This piece of work does not feature on the work plan for the remits review.

2.3 Governance Committee Remits Review Work Plan

- 2.3.1 The task and finish group met in June to scope out a work plan to progress the remits review activity, and a proposed work plan is in the slidepack at Appendix 1 to this report.

3. How does this decision contribute?

- 3.1 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 Council Plan.
- 3.2 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 Council Plan.

4. Has there been any consultation?

- 4.1 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.
- 4.2 The proposed work plan includes various opportunities for engagement with Members and officers as part of the discovery phase and the development of

proposals and sharing them with Members, members of the public and officers.

5. Risk analysis and implications of the decision

5.1 Equality Implications

- 5.1.1 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.

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

5.2 Financial and Commercial Implications

- 5.2.1 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.

5.3 Legal Implications

- 5.3.1 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.

5.4 Climate Implications

- 5.4.1 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.

- 5.4.2 “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"

- 5.4.3 Appendix 1 'Engagement Findings extracted from report to governance committee 9th 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".
- 5.4.4 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.
- 5.4.5 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 13th December 2023^[1], and should be considered for both individual affected committees and the council as a whole.

[1] 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