

Councillor Chris Read – Leader of the Council

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31st October 2019

Sent by email to:
Simon.A.Ball@outlook.com

Dear Mr Ball,

At yesterday's council meeting, you had intended to ask the question:

Just 8 out of the 63 councillors here have been given the power to make nearly all Council decisions. In this undemocratic decision-making system, the other 55 councillors have little or no say, are you happy for this undemocratic way to continue?

Because you were unable to attend, I am responding in writing in line with the Council's usual protocol.

During 2014 and 2015, we undertook a Governance Review on a cross-party basis, chaired by an academic, Prof Tony Crook, from the University of Sheffield. As part of that process, councillors considered the best way for the council to make decisions and improve services, including consideration of some form of committee system or a directly elected mayoral model.

As part of that process, councillors from all sides agreed to introduce the pre-Scrutiny system which we now have, which allows non-Cabinet and opposition members to scrutinise and formally recommend changes to executive function decisions before they are taken. Since its introduction, 95% of those recommendations have been adopted. At the same time, the system gives us clear accountability, whilst also allowing space for wider policy development and scrutiny of the council's delivery.

It is the balance of all these roles: policy development, scrutiny, performance management, appropriate levels of delegation, and formal accountability, which together make our model properly democratic.

Of course the big strategic decisions such as the Council's budget are agreed at the full council meeting where all 63 members have a vote. Licensing, Planning and Neighbourhoods decisions are all taken by members of the council in other ways.

The Rotherham model is almost unique within local government and since it seems to be working well for us we have no intention to change it at present.

Yours sincerely,



Councillor Chris Read
Leader of Rotherham Council