

## CITY OF SHEFFIELD

### METROPOLITAN DISTRICT

#### MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL – 4<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2015

#### COPIES OF QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS THERETO

##### Questions

##### Answers

#### Questions of Councillor Colin Ross to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Julie Dore)

1. What are the implications of the Devolution Agreement on the other 5 (non-constituent) local authorities, is this Devolution agreement just South Yorkshire-writ-large rather than devolution for the whole Sheffield City Region?

This is all set out very clearly in the proposal, which is publically available.
2. With devolved powers over transport, will the Sheffield City Region Combined Authority be able to influence the siting of the HS2 station in Sheffield?

It is critical that a once-in-a-generation economic infrastructure investment like HS2 maximises the long-term economic benefit for the City Region's economy. The evidence is overwhelming for the station to be in the city centre to maximise jobs and business growth for the city region.

Because it is a national infrastructure project, the final decision on station location will continue to sit with Government and HS2 Limited. We will continue to push for the initial station location to be revised to be situated at Victoria.
3. How will the funding of schools, sixth form colleges and Further Education colleges be affected by this Agreement?

The proposed Agreement has two elements regarding skills/training. One element for post-19 training and the second for 16-18s.

The post-19 element will see the devolution of powers and resources for adult skills and training to the Sheffield City Region (SCR). This agreement covers a significant proportion of further education college budgets and, as a

result, in future it will be SCR's responsibility to deploy those resources effectively to deliver better outcomes for people and our economy.

The 16-18 element secures for SCR the leadership of the Area-based Review over 16-18 education provision in SCR.

4. Why is there nothing in this agreement about devolution of NHS and Adult Social Care, as in the Greater Manchester Authority agreement?

The proposed deal is focused on driving economic growth in SCR.

Unlike in Greater Manchester, whilst it is clear that the Sheffield City Region geography is our functioning *economic* area, it does not automatically follow that this geography works for public services, like health and social care.

Sheffield is already pioneering health and social care reform and integrated commissioning at the city level with one of the biggest and most ambitious Better Care Fund proposals.

5. Given the Chancellor of the Exchequer, The Rt. Hon. George Osborne MP's announcement at the Conservative Party Conference that local authorities will be able to retain 100% of their business rates regardless of whether they have a directly elected mayor, do you think you have sold Sheffield City Region short in accepting this condition without gaining more devolved powers in return?

The proposal if agreed would see Sheffield City Region gaining other devolved powers, therefore the premise of your question is incorrect.

Questions of Councillor Steve Ayris to Councillor Jayne Dunn (Cabinet Member for Housing)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. When will the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) be completed? | The SHLAA will be completed and published on 11 <sup>th</sup> November, 2015 as part of the public consultation on the “City Wide Options for Growth 2034” document. |
| 2. When will the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) be published? | See answer above.  |

Questions of Councillor Rob Frost to Councillor Terry Fox (Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport)

1. According to the Council website, Crookes will be resurfaced in the zone resurfacing period August 2015. However, this work has yet to take place. Do you have a start date for Crookes?  
Crookes forms part of the A13 Fulwood Zone. Approximately 50% of the road resurfacing has been completed in the zone over the last four months. Footpath resurfacing in the zone will continue through the winter months and the remaining road resurfacing will commence again in February and be fully completed by the end of March next year, subject to weather conditions.
2. Will this major road resurfacing be completed by the end of this year?  
The road resurfacing will be completed by the end of March 2016

Questions of Councillor Joe Otten to Councillor Terry Fox (Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport)

1. Is the Streets Ahead programme currently on schedule? If not, which zones are delayed?  
We haven't had the final results on the milestones for the current year but Amey are confident of meeting them.
2. When will the verge protection strategy be agreed?  
Our proposed approach to treating damaged areas is undergoing some fine tuning to ensure we offer the right solutions for the city.
3. Are you willing to deviate from national standards on the degree of ramping of footpaths where this may allow valuable highway trees to be spared?  
The Council are rightly committed to embracing inclusive mobility across all areas of our highway network. The Council has a legal duty to consider the needs of the disabled particularly when it is improving the highway. The Council is also morally bound to ensure we do all we can to improve our street scene and make our city open and accessible to all.  
  
The ramping limits we operate within are longstanding and are detailed in Council developer design guides. The ramping details are also in national use and to deviate from them would send a message that Sheffield does

not show appropriate regard to the needs of disabled people

The Access Liaison Group that represents disabled groups recently confirmed their view that the ramping limits we have are appropriate

The percentage of trees removed on these grounds is low. Of the trees replaced by Streets Ahead around 90% were identified as being dead, dangerous, diseased or dying, leaving around 10% of trees over a three year period which have been removed for either irreparably damaging highway network infrastructure or damaging third party property (i.e. subsidence) - the discriminatory element of tree removals accounts for a tiny proportion tree replacements.

4. Is it appropriate for healthy and valuable tree specimens to be removed simply because the manner of the routine planing and rebuilding of the footway would damage the tree to the extent of compromising it?

We can assure you that no tree is removed simply because of the manner of the routine planning and rebuilding of the footway. The Streets Ahead team of Arboricultural and Civil Engineering experts work hard to retain as many trees as possible

5. How many trees have had roots excavated sensitively in preference to root planing?

Sensitive excavations are taking place on a daily basis around highway trees across the city.

6. How many taxis have been issued with tickets in the last year for passing through a tram gate?

Between 01/11/2014 and 31/10/2015 4,679 bus lane PCNs have been cancelled as the vehicle was exempt. This includes not just taxis and PHV vehicles but also other vehicles such as minibuses for example.

7. How many of these are repeats?

To calculate this we would have to go through the complete list but from a sample check an estimate of 64% of PCNs were repeat ones issued to a same vehicle. Some of these are ones which are Sheffield City Council licenced taxis/PHVs, but others are other vehicles, for example non

Sheffield City Council licenced vehicles/taxis and minibuses which may not have been on our exemption lists at the time the PCNs were issued.

8. What has this cost the Council?

An approximate cost of five minutes of officer time for each PCN (these have been handled in a variety of ways including from telephone calls in cases where we have been able to verify whilst the caller is on the line the vehicle is on an existing exemption list, as well as replying to written representations received by Parking Services). Where written replies have been sent costs have been minimised by sending one letter advising all the outstanding bus lane PCNs for the vehicle have been cancelled. An estimate of postal costs would be about £1,150.

9. On how many occasions has this resulted in bailiffs being used?

This is not possible to breakdown without individually checking the PCNs issued

10. Are you satisfied with the operation of parking services?

I am not satisfied with this incident

Question of Councillor Cliff Woodcraft to Councillor Terry Fox (Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport)

At the recent allotments meeting it was reported that allotment rents would rise by the retail price index of 2.5%. Please could you confirm if this is true, or whether the rents will be based on land value and costs?

The meeting to which Coucillor. Woodcraft refers to is the Allotment Advisory Group. At the meeting on the 29<sup>th</sup> September, 2015 Chris Heeley (Head of Countryside and Environment) presented a report that clearly stated that allotment rents will remain unchanged until April 2017.

However, the Council is required to give 12 months' notice on any rent increases and therefore needs to inform tenants of any changes for April 2017 by the end of March 2016. The Allotment Service is now self-funding and all the money raised

through rents and amenity charges goes directly to the Allotment Service. This means the Service is not directly affected by the significant reductions in funding being experienced elsewhere in the Council. By April 2017, allotment rents will have been frozen for three years. This means that in real terms the allotment service is now less well funded than when the rents were frozen in 2014. This is because our costs have increased on average £7,332 per year with inflation. In effect each year there is approximately £7,000 less to spend on the items tenants ask for, such as improved security, skip provision, footpath repairs and water infrastructure repairs.

No decision has been made regarding future rents. The meeting on the 29<sup>th</sup> September gave officers the opportunity to discuss with Councillors, Allotment Societies and members of the Allotment Federation, some of the issues that will need to be considered when setting rents for April 2017 onwards. Councillor Fox will take on board these views along with those made at the next Allotment Advisory Group in December before making a decision on rent levels for 2017 onwards.

Questions of Councillor Vickie Priestley to Councillor Mazher Iqbal (Cabinet Member for Public Health)

1. What will the impact of the introduction of Universal Credit be on the citizens of Sheffield?

At this stage it is difficult to predict the impact this will have but there are some significant differences between Universal Credit (UC) and the benefits and credits it will replace which will have an impact on those who go on to receive UC. These include citizens receiving one payment, including housing costs, which will be paid monthly in arrears. This is different to how current benefits and credits are paid and may mean that many citizens experience difficulties in budgeting and managing their finances and in turn this could lead to increases in rent and council tax arrears.

The default position for claiming and maintaining entitlement to UC is that citizens will be expected to claim and engage with the Department for Work and Pensions electronically. This could pose difficulties for citizens who are currently digitally excluded.

2. What will the impact of the introduction of Universal Credit be on the Citizens Advice services?

Sheffield City Council recognises that the welfare changes already implemented, and the further changes to welfare provision announced in the summer are likely to continue to have a significant impact on a wide range of voluntary sector organisations in the city, including Sheffield Citizens Advice. For this reason, the Council has continued to provide substantial support to Sheffield Citizens Advice to ensure that residents get the advice they need, and to help them to claim benefits that they are entitled to, including Universal Credit.



Questions of Councillor Penny Baker to Councillor Sioned-Mair Richards (Acting Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. When will the review of Local Area Partnerships be completed? | The review of Local Area Partnerships will be part of a wider review of Neighbourhoods Strategy that will be taking place over the next 12 months. |
| 2. When it is complete, who will this be shared with?            | This will be shared with partners, Members and the people of Sheffield.  |

Questions of Councillor Sue Alston to Councillor Sioned-Mair Richards (Acting Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. How are current negotiations with Nether Green JFC regarding the leasing of part or the whole of the Bents Green Playing Fields? | Nether Green JFC have a “letter of comfort” from Sheffield City Council (Parks) to share with potential funders, such as Sport England, stating that Heads of Terms for a lease will be negotiated if the Club are successful in attracting appropriate levels of grant funding to invest on site. The exact terms of any lease with the club(s) who use the site will be negotiated in due course, subject to the potential funder’s specific criteria. This temporary solution protects the Club from the costs, fees, risks and liabilities of entering into a long-term lease at present. |
| 2. When will a decision be taken regarding fencing around Redmires Playing Fields as requested by Hallam and Redmires Rangers JFC?  | Approximately, £6,000 of Section 106 drainage improvements has recently been completed and security and access to the site is now being looked at with the remaining £4,000 available. As the site has shared use by the public and also other licensed users, such as the model flying club, any fencing needs to be done sensitively. Parks Officers will meet with the football club and others again shortly to explore the options to control any misuse by motorbikes/vehicles whilst also  |

maintaining unrestricted public recreational access for all.

3. When will you be bringing proposals forward for a football hub site in partnership with the FA in the South West of Sheffield?

The FA and the Council have started work on the Graves and Thorncliffe projects. Further work is underway on identifying future sites and each of these will require detailed funding and business plans before they can be confirmed. All feasible sites will have been agreed within 12 months.

Questions of Councillor Richard Shaw to Councillor Sioned-Mair Richards (Acting Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods)

As I have not yet received the written response promised at the September meeting of Full Council:-

1. Do you welcome the success of the 2015 Lowedges Festival, with it being the largest and best attended in the Festival's seven year history?
2. Can you confirm whether the Council is planning to charge organisers of the Lowedges Festival an additional £300 because of the Festival's success?

Yes, we are delighted that the event was so well attended.

No proposal has been made to increase the fee charged to the Lowedges Festival for the event in 2016. However, we do need to review community events as a whole, as the classification hasn't changed for years, along with the £60 administration charge. There are some established events which were small scale but have now grown to attract hundreds of people, which vastly increases costs for managing and maintaining the spaces.

The review is planned to take place early 2016 and will be shared for comment. Any recommendations will go through the usual political and consultation approval process.

3. Will you cancel any planned increase in fees charged to the Lowedges Festival, in recognition of the many economic and

No proposal has been made to increase the fee charged to the Lowedges Festival for the event in

cultural benefits this and other community  
events bring to our City?

2016.

Question of Councillor Cliff Woodcraft to Councillor Ben Curran (Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources)

Sheffield is rightly proud to be designated the first city of sanctuary in the United Kingdom. In the city there are number of individuals who have opened their homes to asylum seekers awaiting appeal. Will the Council help support these generous people by waiving the requirement to pay council tax on these properties?

The Council Tax regulations which govern the granting of Council tax exemptions and discounts do not allow for reductions in Council tax to be applied in these circumstances, nor do they allow for reductions in Council tax to be applied to a class of taxpayers, other than those covered by existing legislation.

The Council does have a general discretion to reduce Council tax liability in individual cases. Any request would be considered on its merits.

Questions of Councillor Andrew Sangar to Councillor Ben Curran (Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources)

1. How much is currently owed in Sheffield in unpaid Council Tax?

As at 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2015, the figure is £33,948,000. You will be aware that this is lower than the amount outstanding when the Liberal Democrats last formed the Administration in 2010/11. I trust that you appreciate that we are making progress on this issue, despite the steps that your party took in Government to squeeze the incomes of families across Sheffield.

As I am still waiting on a written answer to my questions from September I would again like to ask:-

In the Fairness Commission Annual report March 2014 it was stated 'A Living Wage has been implemented by the Council for the staff it directly employs. Work is on-going with contractors. For all new contracts it will seek a commitment from suppliers to move to the Living Wage over time'.

2. What steps has the Council taken to encourage contractors to pay the Living Wage?

All tenders now include the following clause to promote the Living Wage:

*Sheffield City Council is committed to the introduction of the Living Wage not only for Council Staff but also seek a commitment from contracted suppliers, the primary reason being to improve the quality of life for low paid individuals but also a positive impact on the local economy and the reputation of the Council. In the UK there is a statutory Minimum Wage, the Living Wage is a higher figure which is voluntary and is calculated by the Living Wage Foundation [www.livingwage.org.uk](http://www.livingwage.org.uk).*

3. How many new contracts have been signed overall since March 2014, and how many of these have included a requirement to pay the Living Wage?

There have been 115 contracts let since March 2014. A large majority of our contractors pay Living Wage or above (estimated to be 80% as at 2014/15) and we continue to work closely with remaining contractors to allow them to pay their staff the Living Wage as soon as is possible. We are also taking into account payment of the Living Wage when contracts come up for tender and are taking action through these processes to ensure more of our contractors pay the Living Wage.

This page is intentionally left blank