

MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL – 4TH SEPTEMBER , 2019

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

ANSWERS WHERE CABINET MEMBERS HAD UNDERTAKEN TO PROVIDE WRITTEN RESPONSES TO BE PUBLISHED ON THE COUNCIL'S WEBSITE

Questions

Answers

Question of Councillor Douglas Johnson to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Julie Dore)

6. What carbon offsetting has been applied to flights booked by Sheffield City Council to China, and any other trips taken by Members or officers since May 2016?

I have been advised that carbon offsetting has not been used. I have asked for officers to develop a new policy which looks at the use of carbon offsetting.

Question of Councillor Alison Teal to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Julie Dore)

3. In an article published in the local Nether Edge magazine, The Edge, in February 2017, you are quoted as saying that an independent roadside tree survey completed in 2006-07 reported to the Council that seventy-five percent of trees in Sheffield were approaching the end of their natural lives. Mr Elliott, who conducted the survey and wrote the report has stated that he never said this. Can you tell me where you obtained the information?

The specific language used in the article was something that had been in Council communications describing the Elliott survey. This had taken place a number of times and a long period before this article.

I apologise if Mr Elliott believes this is inaccurate and I give assurances that his report will not be referred to in these terms again.

Questions of Councillor Paul Turpin to Councillor Abtisam Mohamed (Cabinet Member for Education and Skills)

4. How many tetrapak cartons of milk are supplied to schools each year in Sheffield through the Hillsborough Dairies contract?

I will provide a written response to this question which will be published on the Council's website. (Answer awaited)

5. How many schools have signed up to this contract?

I will provide a written response to this question which will be published

on the Council's website. (Answer awaited)

6. How many tetrapaks are supplied with fruit juice in the Taylor Shaw contract to Sheffield schools?

I will provide a written response to this question which will be published on the Council's website. (Answer awaited)

Question of Councillor Alison Teal to Councillor Paul Wood (Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Community Safety) – Question Answered by Councillor Bob Johnson (Cabinet Member for Transport and Development)

2. What progress has been made to streamline the application process for Play Street activities as promised by the Administration after the Greens introduced a motion on 6th December 2017? In December 2017 the Administration stated there would be a one year trial period for the Play Streets scheme and that the Administration was “already designing a transparent policy on street play events”. Is the policy now available? When is the trial period due to commence?

We have been working on developing this and, as you may have seen, I made an announcement at the July Council meeting. I will be able to provide a more detailed update with further information shortly.

Questions of Councillor Martin Smith to the Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Governance

1. In the last year, what was the total value of Business Rate Relief granted by the Council under the following schemes, how many applications were received and how many of those applications were successful?
- Hardship Rate Relief
 - Discretionary Rate Relief
 - Rural Rate Relief
 - Living Wage Relief

In the last year there were 20 applications for Hardship Relief, 2 of which were successful. There is no single relief called discretionary relief, but if Councillor Smith is referring to Not for Profit Relief and Discretionary Top Up Relief to Mandatory Charity Relief, then the number of applications received was 24, of which 11 were successful.

There were no applications for Rural Rate Relief or Living Wage Relief. Since the Rateable Value limit for full Small Business Rate Relief (SBRR) was increased to £12,000, the demand for Rural Rate Relief has almost disappeared due to the fact that SBRR will cover the rate liability.

The total amount of relief granted amounted to £96,784.83. However, it should be noted that when all business rates relief is taken into account, over 11,000 of the 19,000 properties liable for business rates in the City receive some form of business rates relief which, annually, amounts to over £45m.

2. If a business is placed under severe financial hardship through the direct action or inaction of the City Council, does this make them eligible for discretionary relief under the existing Council policy? If not, why not?

All applications for Hardship Relief are considered on their merits, with all relevant factors being considered when deciding if the granting of Hardship Relief is warranted. However, it is not the purpose of the relief to support businesses who otherwise would be trading insolvent. Rather, the Relief is more often used to support businesses, in particular sole traders, who have a ceased liability and who, for a variety of reasons, are unable to repay the outstanding amounts and it would be uneconomic or against the Council's business rates recovery policy, on the grounds of vulnerability, to pursue recovery.

Question of Councillor Mohammed Mahroof to the Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Governance

How many external consultants have the City Council appointed in the last three years and at what cost?

To answer this question will require financial analysis, and I will provide you with the answer as soon as the information is available.

Questions of Councillor Douglas Johnson to the Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Governance

1. How much has the Council spent on external legal costs in each of the last three years?

External legal support is only obtained where it is needed because there is not the required specialist expertise in the in-house team. This is controlled in that only Legal Services or the Insurance Teams can commission the use of external legal

support. This ensures that they can be satisfied there is a need that cannot be delivered in-house and that we obtain the best value for money. They also then have oversight of the instructions to ensure the advice remains focussed and that the charges remain reasonable.

Due to the way that spend is recorded in our accounts system, I cannot give you exact figures on the amount spent in each year on legal advice because the totals include other sums sent to the Council's external legal providers such as sums for property purchases, fees for reports and experts as well as sums sent via solicitors to third parties. These can be significant and exceed the cost of our legal support.

2. Do you agree that it is very strongly in the public interest for information about the management of Sheffield City Trust to be made public when it requires the Council to divert £1 million away from other essential spending?

We have committed to share the report on SIV when findings have been analysed. An update will be given to the Economic and Environmental Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee on 22nd October, where myself and Councillor Mary Lea are attending and will share further details.

Question of Councillor Paul Turpin to the Cabinet Member for Environment, Streetscene and Climate Change

How much has the Council spent clearing fly tipping from (a) private land behind Newfield Green shops, (b) Gleadless Valley ward and (c) citywide?

(a) The land owner was traced by Environmental Enforcement and requested to clear the land; the clearance was arranged, and paid for, by the land owner. The Council did not spend any money clearing fly tipping from this land. This has been the case on all previous occasions, with previous landowners.

(b) We cannot provide spend by Ward.

(c) Within the Ward area, we

recorded 333 incidents of fly tipping and 5,892 incidents of black bags and other waste left around blocks of flats. This was the third highest in the city.

In total, Housing Services spend in 2018/19 on fly tipping and other waste disposal costs, was in the region of £304,000.

Sheffield Countryside and Woodlands Team spending:
(a) none (b) £5,000 (c) £15,000.

Fly tipping removal on the highway is carried out by Amey and is paid for as part of the Streets Ahead Unitary Charge. We do not have individual cost breakdowns for specific locations or service areas.

In respect of Newfield shops private land, any work the Council has done in the past was backed by legal notices and costs charged to landowners, so the City Council has not paid for the work.

Private land owners are expected to take responsibility for their land. Where possible we offer advice and guidance.

Question of Councillor Martin Smith to Councillor Mazher Iqbal (Cabinet Member for Business and Investment)

2. With regards to the HOC2, how much interest has been paid or accrued to date on the money the Council is borrowing to fund the project?

(This question was also asked at the Council meeting held on 2nd October, and the answer set out below was provided)

HoC finances are intended to be covered within the project. Hence there are NO costs for HoC in the general fund budget and no impact on council tax this year or planned for next year.

As has been well documented, there is significant upfront investment into the project from the Council, an element of which is interest. However, as stated above, overall all costs are intended to be recovered within the project from eventual sale of the assets and/or rental income.

In order to provide a full picture, a detailed briefing is needed, highlighting the overall income generated from sales as well as rental income, to be considered against interest charges. Elements of this information are commercially sensitive, which makes it more complicated to provide an answer and I am seeking advice about how this can be put into the public domain. Please accept my apologies that this means you are not getting the answer now, however, you will receive this information.

Questions of Councillor Douglas Johnson to Councillor Bob Johnson (Cabinet Member for Transport and Development)

9. How many homes were approved for planning permission in each of 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 to date?

The total number of homes granted planning permission in each year is:-

2015/16:	3,498 homes
2016/17:	4,646 homes
2017/18:	3,622 homes

The data for 2018/19 is not yet available.

10. Of these, for each year, how many met the Government's affordable housing definition?

This data is not available.