

Council Meeting – 1st November 2023

Questions Received from Members of the Public, answered by the Relevant Policy Committee Chairs

Name of Questioner	Question	Relevant Policy Committee Chair(s)
Abdullah Okud	<p>What were the reasons behind the decision made to erect the Israeli flag above the Town Hall? This decision demands an answer. Firstly because it shows that we as the city of sanctuary condone the false equivalence of the coloniser and the colonised which is inherently a stance that supports apartheid, racism and genocide and a deeply worrying position and not one supported by the people of Sheffield. Secondly this has demonstrated that you do not recognise or understand that the violence we witness today is rooted in over seven decades of an oppressive condition and caging of the Palestinian people which is well documented. Finally do you agree and uphold the Palestinian peoples inalienable right to resist enshrined in UN resolution 2625 as “the legitimacy of the struggle of peoples for independence, territorial integrity, national unity and liberation from colonial domination, apartheid and foreign occupation by all available means”</p> <p><i>An answer was provided at the meeting and the webcast and minutes (when published) can be found here:</i></p> <p>Agenda for Council on Wednesday 1 November 2023, 2.00 pm Sheffield City Council</p>	Cllr Tom Hunt (Leader of the Council & Chair of Strategy and Resources Policy Committee)
Derek Martin	<p>The world just now is a very dangerous and fast changing place, things are going on just now that are outside our direct control. However, Sheffield is one of the UKs core cities, what we say and do does matter, collectively with the other core cities we can have a massive influence on the present government. Sheffield must do the right thing, the situation in Gaza is appalling, nowhere is safe, they have even been issued with evacuation orders for the main hospitals, this situation cannot go on.</p>	Cllr Tom Hunt (Leader of the Council & Chair of Strategy and Resources Policy Committee)

	<p>I call on the three leaders of the main political parties in the city to act in unanimity, to lead from the front, in calling for an immediate ceasefire and to call on the leaders of the other core cities to work together and do the same.</p> <p><i>An answer was provided at the meeting and the webcast and minutes (when published) can be found here:</i></p> <p><u>Agenda for Council on Wednesday 1 November 2023, 2.00 pm Sheffield City Council</u></p>	
<p>Jasmine Murphy</p>	<p>Seeing that the residents of Sheffield were so horrified by this Council's decision to raise the Israeli flag above the Town Hall on our behalf, without our consent, that some of us took it upon ourselves to remove it at great personal risk, will the Leader of this Council, Cllr Tom Hunt, finally recognise not only that raising it was disrespectful to the people of Sheffield who oppose its apartheid regime, but also, because it was symbolically supportive of Israel's illegal occupation and collective punishment, that it was an act of grave disrespect to the Palestinian victims of these war crimes, and will he apologise to the people of Sheffield for this decision?</p> <p><i>An answer was provided at the meeting and the webcast and minutes (when published) can be found here:</i></p> <p><u>Agenda for Council on Wednesday 1 November 2023, 2.00 pm Sheffield City Council</u></p>	<p>Cllr Tom Hunt (Leader of the Council & Chair of Strategy and Resources Policy Committee)</p>
<p>Sahar Awadallah</p>	<p>Given that raising the Israeli flag can be deemed to be standing in solidarity with an apartheid state and settler colonialism as described by UN special Rapporteur, in addition to being contrary to S.149 of the Equality Act 2010, Palestinian citizens of Sheffield want to know when will Cllr Tom Hunt and the rest of the City Council express its official support for Sheffield's Palestinian community, and what substantial steps will it take to prove its support?</p> <p><i>An answer was provided at the meeting and the webcast and minutes (when published) can be found here:</i></p>	<p>Cllr Tom Hunt (Leader of the Council & Chair of Strategy and Resources Policy Committee)</p>

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Mohammad Maroof	<p>1. Who was involved in the decision making regarding flying the Israeli flag on Sheffield Town Hall on October 7th, please name the individuals who supported the idea if it is not something confidential?</p> <p>2. After learning the disproportionate response to Hamas attack, over 7500 innocent civilians have been killed, amongst those are over 3000 children, death toll is rising every hour, can I ask have you changed your position since October 7 that it was a dreadful decision to fly apartheid Israeli state's flag which cause hurt to thousands of people of our city? If you regret, why don't you apologise publicly now? However, if you stand by your decision and don't apologise, would you consider stepping down before you face a vote of no confidence?</p> <p>3. Will you stand up and say Israel is committing war crime and it's genocide, it's breach of international law, call for an immediate ceasefire, end Israeli brutal occupation and free Palestine to save Palestinians and Israeli lives?</p> <p>Answers were provided at the meeting and the webcast and minutes (when published) can be found here:</p> <p>Agenda for Council on Wednesday 1 November 2023, 2.00 pm Sheffield City Council</p>	Cllr Tom Hunt (Leader of the Council & Chair of Strategy and Resources Policy Committee)
Famila Hussain	<p>In light of the humanitarian crisis currently unfolding in the Gaza strip, the clear evidence that Israel has committed war crimes and intends to further commit war crimes against Gaza's civilian population, and the population of Sheffield's consistent condemnation of Israel's actions, I ask if this Council will heed the calls of its constituents to lobby the central government to withdraw its official support of Israel, or will it allow the continued unwavering support of a nation which has repeatedly and flagrantly violated international and humanitarian laws?</p> <p>An answer was provided at the meeting and the webcast and minutes (when published) can be found here:</p> <p>Agenda for Council on Wednesday 1 November 2023, 2.00 pm Sheffield City Council</p>	Cllr Tom Hunt (Leader of the Council & Chair of Strategy and Resources Policy Committee)

<p>Hend Rashed</p>	<p>On behalf of the citizens of Sheffield who are concerned about the impact of their Pension Fund in supporting the ongoing lethal attacks on civilians in Gaza and the rising death toll from the continuous bombardment, will the Council call on the finance committee to review the Local Pension Fund investments and Alternative Investments and to divest from any holdings linked to Israeli settlements and companies that support colonial projects in the Occupied Territories of Palestine?"</p> <p><i>An answer was provided at the meeting and the webcast and minutes (when published) can be found here:</i></p> <p><u>Agenda for Council on Wednesday 1 November 2023, 2.00 pm Sheffield City Council</u></p>	<p>Cllr Tom Hunt (Leader of the Council & Chair of Strategy and Resources Policy Committee)</p>
<p>Peter Jones</p>	<p>Israel is committing genocide against the Palestinian people of Gaza. They have cut off food, water, fuel, electricity and all means of communication, causing imminent threat to the lives of 2.2 million people, many thousands of whom have already been killed by relentless and indiscriminate bombing. Why is this Council not doing everything in its power to oppose this genocidal assault and end the complicity of the Government and official opposition in this genocide?</p> <p><i>An answer was provided at the meeting and the webcast and minutes (when published) can be found here:</i></p> <p><u>Agenda for Council on Wednesday 1 November 2023, 2.00 pm Sheffield City Council</u></p>	<p>Cllr Tom Hunt (Leader of the Council & Chair of Strategy and Resources Policy Committee)</p>
<p>Leni Solinger</p>	<p>I am a Jewish member of Sheffield Palestine Solidarity Campaign and in November 2022 I was proud to take part in the launch of Sheffield Coalition against Israeli Apartheid and to be one of the first to formally pledge my support to the movement to make Sheffield a city free of all links with Israeli apartheid. I lived in Sheffield when the Council supported the South African anti-apartheid movement and was proud of its moral stance then. There are many Jewish people who feel as I do about the apartheid system against Palestinians. I am here to ask the Leader of the Council and the leaders of all the other political parties represented on this Council if you will meet, as a matter of urgency,</p>	<p>Cllr Tom Hunt (Leader of the Council & Chair of Strategy and Resources Policy Committee)</p>

	<p>with members of the Coalition's co-ordinating group, to discuss ways in which Sheffield City Council can ensure that it works to break all links with Israel's system of Apartheid and in particular with all those companies which support Israel's apartheid regime.</p> <p><i>An answer was provided at the meeting and the webcast and minutes (when published) can be found here:</i></p> <p>Agenda for Council on Wednesday 1 November 2023, 2.00 pm Sheffield City Council</p>	
Josh Cheesman	<p>In light of the ongoing concerns over human rights in the People's Republic of China, including, but not limited to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The violation of the right to freedom of speech and assembly (notably within Hong Kong, under the National Security Law where Chow Hang-tung was sentenced to 15 months in prison for a social media post). • Restrictions on the freedom of expression, persecution of human rights defenders (like legal scholar Xu Zhiyong). • Suppression of freedom of religion & expression of culture (not least those of the Uyghurs and Kazakhs). • Harassing members of the LGBT community, including Tsinghua University students for leaving rainbow flags on the campus. • Its continued position as the world's leading state executioner. <p>Does the Council feel it appropriate to retain its twinning with the Chinese cities of Anshan and Chengdu, and its Trade & Collaboration Agreements with the cities of Daqing and Nanchang?</p> <p><i>An answer was provided at the meeting and the webcast and minutes (when published) can be found here:</i></p> <p>Agenda for Council on Wednesday 1 November 2023, 2.00 pm Sheffield City Council</p>	Cllr Tom Hunt (Leader of the Council & Chair of Strategy and Resources Policy Committee)
Clara Cheung	<p>Has Sheffield Council had any exchanges or dialogues about protection of human rights at municipal level, with the cities in the People's Republic of China</p>	Cllr Tom Hunt (Leader of the Council &

	<p>(China) that hold twin-city relationship or collaboration agreement with Sheffield (i.e. Anshan, Chengdu, Daqing and Nanchang)? If so, can you please tell us more about the details? If not, why not? Besides, what other exchanges or dialogues has Sheffield Council had with these cities?</p> <p>Answers were provided at the meeting and the webcast and minutes (when published) can be found here:</p> <p>Agenda for Council on Wednesday 1 November 2023, 2.00 pm Sheffield City Council</p>	<p>Chair of Strategy and Resources Policy Committee)</p>
<p>Simon Jenkins</p>	<p>My question is regarding Minimum Service Levels As the onus is on the employer to bring in a Minimum Service Level during industrial action, can the Council confirm if they or any of their outsourced partners be using this legislation and has there been any discussion with central government regarding this?</p> <p>An answer was provided at the meeting and the webcast and minutes (when published) can be found here:</p> <p>Agenda for Council on Wednesday 1 November 2023, 2.00 pm Sheffield City Council</p>	<p>Cllr Tom Hunt (Leader of the Council & Chair of Strategy and Resources Policy Committee)</p>
<p>Calvin Payne</p>	<p>Six years ago this week I was convicted on three counts of contempt of court for standing up to the Council's 'unwise' legal approach and proceedings. Six months ago I, despite some misgivings, went along with the process SCC set out for personal apologies and mitigation. Part of this process was explained by the Leader and Chief Executive to the Strategy and Resources Committee on June 19th when they wrote; "...The Council understands that this unwise course of action had serious implications for the small number of people who were found in breach of the injunctions. The Council will contact these people directly and work with them to do everything possible to mitigate any ongoing impact."</p> <p>I would like to ask the Leader of the Council if he is satisfied that SCC have worked with me to do everything possible to mitigate the ongoing impact, and whether he can tell me specifically what actions SCC have taken to achieve this.</p>	<p>Cllr Tom Hunt (Leader of the Council & Chair of Strategy and Resources Policy Committee)</p>

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<p>Isabel O’Leary</p>	<p><u>Cross-departmental working</u></p> <p>The Lowcock Report revealed that a large part of the reason for the Streets Ahead Contract being so flawed in relation to street trees was that one department (in this case Highways) did not consult with any other departments (for example the Ecology Unit) when writing or agreeing the Contract. This kind of working in silos is commonplace in large organisations but is not good practice. At the risk of sounding as though I’m setting an essay question, can you reassure me that cross departmental working is becoming embedded in Sheffield City Council by giving me at least 3 examples of current projects that do involve true collaboration between several different departments. I am particularly interested in projects that are using the expertise of the Ecology Unit.</p> <p><u>Partnership with communities</u></p> <p>The Lowcock Report recommended that the Council should sustain and embed its recent emphasis on partnership, local engagement and consultation. I’m not sure how well this is going. I have been following issues about Graves and Hillsborough Parks and have attended meetings of the Charity Trustee Sub-Committee which is the sole body administering a number of Charities, including several Sheffield Parks. The members of this Sub-Committee are all Sheffield City Councillors. I was present at a recent meeting of the Charity Trustee Sub-Committee when the restoration of the Rose Garden café in Graves Park was discussed. Councillors seemed unaware of some specific information that had been repeatedly offered by Friends Groups and was contrary to the information given to Councillors by Council Officers. Whilst I welcome the very recent decision of the Charity Trustee Sub-Committee to form a partnership with 2 community groups, I do wonder whether decisions and action to restore the café building could have been arrived at much more quickly than the 15 months it has taken, if these local community groups had been listened to earlier.</p>	<p>Cllr Tom Hunt (Leader of the Council & Chair of Strategy and Resources Policy Committee)</p>

In order to inject some vigour into the bureaucratic paralysis of Council processes, would the Council consider co-opting members of Friends or other community groups onto the Charity Trustee Sub-Committee at a much earlier stage when considering issues in which those groups have knowledge, expertise and conduits for local consultation?

Accountability

I welcomed the setting up of Lowcock Independent Inquiry into the Street Tree Dispute. However, the recommendations of the Lowcock Report were remarkably mild in the light of the damning evidence of Council practices, including the unreasonable and disproportionate use of their legal powers, specifically the aggressive pursuit of Injunctions against residents trying to prevent the unnecessary felling of street trees. This issue of Governmental bodies or Local Authorities using their greater legal and financial power to intimidate environmental protestors is a very live one nationally. I would like other Local Authorities to learn from the Sheffield experience that taking out Injunctions against residents involved in environmental protests is a bad idea. However, despite the apologies extensively reported in the press, as these apologies are being made by the current leaders of the Council and not by those who were responsible for those bad decisions at the time, the message so far to public servants is that they can leave a post and move to another post in another city without any personal consequences.

We know from the Lowcock Report who was ultimately responsible for pursuing Injunctions against the street tree protestors. Will the Council leaders publicly, without breaching GDPR, use their well-resourced and effective Communications department to ask those who were responsible for the wrongful decisions to apologise? This might go some way to restoring the Council's reputation by showing a desire for accountability.

Answers were provided at the meeting and the webcast and minutes (when published) can be found here:

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<p>Ruth Hubbard</p>	<p><i>3 questions had been received from Ms. Hubbard. The Lord Mayor took the view, after receiving advice from the Council's Monitoring Officer, that he would not accept those questions on the grounds that they were not matters within the responsibility of the local authority but were party-political matters relating to the Labour Party. The categories under which the Lord Mayor may not accept questions are set out in Council Procedure Rule 15.1 (e) of the Council's Constitution.</i></p>	
<p>Michael Mullin (not present to ask his questions)</p>	<p>1. In the full council meeting in July 2023 in my 4th question on the Sheffield Trees I queried on why you proposed to kill the trees on Oxford street (in remembrance of the 1st world war). Your council claimed you had not 'submitted' an application but you changed the wording of my question to you have 'not submitted' an application which is an entirely different meaning.</p> <p>Days before Christmas in a meeting it reveals you proposed the trees being cut down on Oxford St. Whilst this meeting appears to discuss preserving some of these memorial trees it was clearly discuss on the possibility of killing them along with many others.</p> <p>https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?AllId=16120</p> <p>If you read my original question about Oxford Street I suggested Sheffield City Council 'proposed' to kill them and this is assertion is evidently correct. Does Sheffield City Council accept that you evidently did 'propose' to kill perfectly healthy trees including on Oxford Street which were originally planted there in remembrance of the 1st World war?</p> <p>Answer: The trees on Oxford Street were originally proposed by Amey for replacement due to irreparable damage to highway infrastructure.</p> <p>The cabinet report you refer to is significantly out of date. As per the joint position statement with Sheffield Tree Action Groups (STAG), the Council have no plans to remove these trees and indeed to the contrary are actively working on designing engineering amendments to the street in order for them to be retained.</p> <p>A copy of a more up-to-date decision is available at: https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/documents/s35699/Street%20Trees%20Strategy.pdf</p> <p>2. In regards to my 9th question on the trees in the full council meeting in July 2023 in reference to the 'Kings</p>	<p>Cllr Tom Hunt (Leader of the Council & Chair of Strategy and Resources Policy Committee)</p>

court building' Sheffield City Council have replied this is not part of public highways and it is up to landlord. At this present time, I haven't been able to identify which landlord you're referring to. I have visited the King Court building and their staff have confirmed that the tree located near its location is not part of their land. In my original question on this I merely referred to this building to help your Council identify the area of concern. Can this Council clarify which landlord made the decision to cut down this tree 'near the King Court building' and grant its planning permissions for this area if it appears to be part of public highways?

Answer: With regards to the area adjacent to Kings Court buildings, in response to your previous query, the highway records team were consulted, who confirmed categorically that the tree is not located within the adopted highway managed by Sheffield City Council. Having consulted again with the Council's highway records team, they confirm that the land in which the tree is situated is private.

3. In the full council meeting in July 2023 Sheffield City Council replied to question 10 regarding the trees that the use of millimetre frequencies is not new. I have previously stated millimetre waves used for 5G technology can't travel as easily through buildings and large objects like trees therefore your own observational comments weren't addressing my request in the question. Ofcom who regulate this say on their website:

We're proposing to make millimetre wave (mmWave) spectrum available so it can be used for 5G, mobile broadband and other new uses. This has the potential to unlock more capacity and faster speeds, which could enable people to benefit from faster broadband, better quality mobile services, and innovative new services. One major benefit is that mm Wave spectrum will give people better services when they're in crowded areas. Sometimes in places where there are lots of people using their mobile phones at the same time, services can become slow, which is frustrating for mobile users. Mm Wave spectrum will help to overcome this by enabling significant increases in the network capacity (the amount of data mobile networks can carry)

<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/news-centre/2022/rolling-out-millimetre-wave-spectrum-what-you-need-to-know>

The recent introduction and expansion of 5G in urban areas has dramatically increased the use of millimetre waves in the environment. This cannot be disputed.

[....] Do you accept you did propose as well as permit perfectly healthy trees to be killed not only for a financial benefit, but whether you were aware of it or not at the same time to conveniently improve the transmission of mm waves for 5G technology?

Answer: We can confirm that 5G mobile phone signal was not in any way a consideration and the Authority robustly resist any requests from mobile phone service providers for tree removal to improve their signal coverage.

(NB. Several words have been removed from the above question, as submitted by Mr. Mullin, on the grounds that the Lord Mayor, after receiving advice from the Council's Monitoring Officer, deemed them to be offensive.)

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