SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

Economic and Environmental Wellbeing Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee

Meeting held 27 July 2017

PRESENT: Councillors Denise Fox (Chair), Ian Auckland (Deputy Chair), Mike Chaplin, Neale Gibson, Dianne Hurst, Mark Jones, Abdul Khayum, Ben Miskell, Robert Murphy, Paul Wood and Adam Hanrahan (Substitute Member)

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Colin Ross (with Councillor Adam Hanrahan attending as his duly appointed substitute) and Martin Smith.

2. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

2.1 No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public and press.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

4.1 Petitions

4.2 The Policy and Improvement Officer (Alice Nicholson) advised that a petition had been received protesting the proposed removal of memorial trees on Heathfield Road in Frecheville. The petition had received a total of 637 signatures at the time of the meeting and therefore qualified as an ordinary petition.

4.3 The Chair advised that, owing to the petition's similarity with the item being discussed later in the agenda, the decision regarding what action to take as a result of this petition would be deferred until the end of the meeting.

4.4 Public Questions

4.5 The Committee received the following questions from members of the public:-

a) Nigel Slack

(i) Mr Slack highlighted the third recommendation of the Working Group, which read:

"We recommend where practicable and affordable that engineering solutions are adopted to retain as many memorial trees on Western Road/Mona Avenue, as far as possible."

Mr Slack queried what was meant by “practicable and affordable” and who would decide what is “practicable and affordable”?

(ii) Why were the only 'technical' consultations with Council or AMEY staff?

4.6 In response to the first question, the Chair advised that a written response would be given by the relevant officer Paul Billington, Director of Culture and Environment, and that consideration of practicable and affordable solutions rested with the Cabinet Member as the decision maker.

4.7 In response to the second question, Councillor Lisa Barnes, Chairman of the Western Road First World War Memorial Trees Task and Finish Cross Party Working Group, confirmed that technical evidence had not been considered as it was outside of the Working Group’s remit, but would be forwarded to the Cabinet Member for consideration. She clarified that technical experts had been from the Council and not from AMEY.

(b) Elizabeth Motley

(i) Ms Motley referred to drawings she submitted to the Working Group which proposed solutions to the tree roots problem on Western Road, and asked whether they had been considered by the Working Party and whether they had been used or acted on?

4.8 Councillor Lisa Barnes confirmed that the drawings had been considered alongside other community evidence that had been submitted. She advised that it had not been in the Working Party’s scope to consider technical evidence, which instead was being submitted to the Cabinet Member.

(c) Arthur Baker

(i) Mr Baker highlighted the fourth recommendation of the Working Group, which read:

“We recommend that the Council look to restoring over time the Western Road War Memorial to its original concept. This would be subject to appropriate space, funding, and agreement with residents on Western Road and Mona Avenue.”

Mr Baker queried what was meant by “original concept”?

(ii) Mr Baker criticised the Working Group’s engagement with residents, and referred to a leaflet that had been circulated by the Council which did not mention the word ‘tree’.

4.9 In response to the first question, Councillor Lisa Banes confirmed that the original concept referred to restoring the memorial to the original number of 97 trees, including replanting the lost trees (in consultation with residents), and advised that conversations with the War Memorial Trust regarding potential funding had begun.

4.10 Regarding engagement, Councillor Lisa Banes confirmed that she had spoken to residents on 9th March who had raised concerns over the planned process for engagement. In light of this, the Working Group invited residents and community groups to 'open interview' style meetings scheduled for a variety of times, and accepted written and emailed representations. This enabled the Group to consult with as many people as possible and accept broader feedback. Councillor Banes confirmed that the word "trees" was absent on the leaflet but emphasised that trees were understood to be an intrinsic part of the memorial, and the leaflet was not meant to diminish their significance.

(d) Alan Story

(i) Mr Story made reference to the Working Group's report that "trees are part of the memorial but not necessarily those specific trees". He advised that the trees had originally been paid for by the public with the Council now the guardian and steward of them, and questioned why the trees were being replaced and how many would be cut down.

(ii) Mr Story asked whether the War Memorial Trust had expressed an opinion regarding tree-replacement.

4.11 Councillor Lisa Banes acknowledged that this was a highly emotive topic and it was appreciated that residents had questions that this Working Group had been unable to consider. She highlighted the third recommendation, which advocated the retention of as many trees as possible, and advised that this was as far as the Group could go without impinging on the remit of the Independent Tree Panel. With regards to the War Memorial Trust she noted that, as potential funders, they were obligated to remain impartial.

(e) Councillor Craig Gamble Pugh

(i) Councillor Gamble Pugh advised that he had put together a detailed submission to the Working Group after speaking to a large percentage of local residents and asked whether it had been considered.

(ii) He stated that, on a walkabout at the site, AMEY officers had advised they wanted to take down most of the trees, which would go against the wishes of many local residents and therefore wouldn't be accepted.

(iii) The Councillor asked whether the Working Group were aware of traffic schemes that were being proposed for the area which might be able to incorporate the memorial trees?

4.12 Councillor Banes confirmed that Councillor Gamble Pugh's submission had been considered by the Group alongside community representations, and advised that AMEY had not been consulted or asked to give evidence to the Working Group. She suggested that details of the traffic schemes should be referred to the Cabinet Member for consideration alongside other technical evidence.

(f) Reuben Fowles

(i) Mr Fowles queried the species of tree that would be replanted.

4.13 The Chair advised that a written response would be given by the relevant officer.

(g) Marie Miller

(i) Ms Miller queried the Council's lack of maintenance, citing a recent incident of trees being tarmacked to an extreme degree.

4.14 Councillor Lisa Banes advised that tarmacking had been carried out in the past as a temporary measure while exploration work was done on roots but, as this had not been done recently to her knowledge, the Chair advised that this would be referred to officers for investigation and a written response would be given.

(h) Brian Mosley

(i) Mr Mosley spoke of his positive experience with the Working Group, but raised his concern over the wording of the recommendations and sought confirmation of whether this Committee would be pursuing the matter and following-up outside of this exercise.

(ii) Referencing residents' desire to retain mature trees, Mr Mosley asked that, where replacements must be made, that saplings not be used.

4.15 Councillor Banes agreed that ensuring this exercise was followed up with ongoing care and a proactive maintenance plan was essential, and this was highlighted in the report at recommendation two. With regard to the second question, Councillor Banes replied that any replacement trees would be older than saplings but confirmed that detail would be provided in a written response by the relevant officer.

5. WESTERN ROAD FIRST WORLD WAR MEMORIAL SCRUTINY TASK AND FINISH WORKING GROUP - DRAFT REPORT

5.1 The Chair invited Councillor Lisa Banes, Chairman of the Western Road First World War Memorial Trees Task and Finish Cross Party Working Group, to present the Working Group's report and recommendations.

5.2 Councillor Banes reported that the Working Group had been set up by this Committee following the submission of a petition at the meeting of the Council held on 4th January 2017. During a series of meetings, the Working Group considered and discussed the evidence and agreed that its role was to listen and gather information from a range of stakeholders and make recommendations for the memorial as a whole, not to supplant the role of the service in terms of making technical judgements or to undertake any consultation activity that was the role of the services to perform.

5.3 Councillor Banes drew the Committee's attention to the importance of this memorial as a living tribute, which was visited often and well-loved by local people, and introduced the eight recommendations set out in the report.

5.4 Members of the Committee thanked Members of the Working Group, officers involved in the project, and residents that had provided evidence and engaged with the process. Members of the Committee then raised questions and the following responses were provided:-

- The Working Group had discussed and agreed this report and its findings at a meeting in March 2017, with final details agreed via email subsequently.

- Earlier intervention might have circumvented the problem, but funding pressures had long been a problem and this report made a recommendation to secure ongoing maintenance and try to prevent problems in the future.

- The recommendations of the Working Group were carefully worded to highlight the issues and suggest a way forward without encroaching on the remit of the Independent Tree Panel. No financial recommendations had been included as this was in the purview of the Cabinet Member for Environment and Streetscene.

- The details of the War Memorial Trust funding bid would be provided to Members in a follow-up report.

- Members noted that the report would be taken to Council for information, with decision-making powers resting with the Cabinet Member.

- Like most memorials, Western Road First World War Memorial had originally been funded by public subscription and should be treated with special consideration and differently to other street trees.

5.5 RESOLVED: That

a) Amended on the motion of Councillor Paul Wood, seconded by Councillor Mike Chaplin, that the Committee endorse the Working Group's recommendations now submitted as follows:

1. We recommend that the Western Road war memorial, with its intrinsic avenue of trees, be considered differently to other street trees. That it should be seen as an exception to the norm, and every effort is made to retain as many existing trees where possible by all appropriate means available to the Council, and that this recommendation does not extend to other types of war memorial.

2. We recommend that beyond the core investment period, the Council moves from a position of limited or no obvious maintenance, to a clear and stated proactive war memorial and tree management plan.

3. We recommend where practicable and affordable that engineering solutions are adopted to retain as many memorial trees on Western

Road/Mona Avenue, as far as possible.

4. We recommend that the Council look to restoring over time the Western Road War Memorial to its original concept. This would be subject to appropriate space, funding, and agreement with residents on Western Road and Mona Avenue.

5. We note and support the Council's commitment to 'replanting and rededicating memorials over the coming months'. In regard to Western Road this could be with a view to unveil a fitting memorial in time for Centenary Anniversary of Armistice Day November 2018.

6. We ask the relevant Cabinet member to share with the public the immediate, medium and longer term, future maintenance plan for Western Road War Memorial street trees.

7. We recommend that the relevant Cabinet Member comes to the Economic and Environmental Scrutiny Committee to explain how they will respond to the differences and challenges identified in a) the Council's technical recommendations following the Independent Tree Panel report, and b), the technical submissions from the community; and also the ask for a technical dialogue between the community and Streets Ahead.

b) that Cabinet be requested to provide an initial response to their recommendations by September 2017, or sooner;

c) that Cabinet be requested to provide a formal response for October 2017; and

d) that the report be shared with Council.

(NOTE: Prior to the passing of the above resolution, two other motions were moved, one by Councillor Robert Murphy and seconded by Councillor Adam Hanrahan, and one proposed by Councillor Ian Auckland and seconded by Councillor Adam Hanrahan, both of which were put to the vote and negatived.)

5.6 The Committee considered the appropriate course of action for the petition submitted regarding Frecheville's WW2 Memorial Trees.

RESOLVED: That the petition regarding Frecheville's WW2 Memorial Trees be referred to Cabinet for consideration.

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

6.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Wednesday, 13th September 2017, at 2.00 pm, in the Town Hall.