

SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

Strategy and Resources Policy Committee

Meeting held 12 July 2023

PRESENT: Councillors Tom Hunt (Chair), Fran Belbin (Deputy Chair), Angela Argenzio, Douglas Johnson (Group Spokesperson), Ben Miskell, Shaffaq Mohammed (Group Spokesperson), Zahira Naz, Martin Smith, Richard Williams, Mark Jones (Substitute Member) and Mike Levery (Substitute Member)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dawn Dale and Joe Otten.

2. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

2.1 No items were identified where resolut and press.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

4.1 The minutes of the previous meetings held on 31 May, 19 June and 28 June 2023 were approved as a correct record.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

5.1 Fatima and Sarah from Sheffield Racism attended to present the following questions that they had submitted:

1. Last month, a group of young people spoke with the education committee as we noticed some very serious concerns about race equality and equity within the education system. We have not heard from anyone and would like to know how serious Sheffield City Council is taking this?

Answer: Sheffield City Council takes the findings of the Race Equality Commission very seriously and progress to become an Anti-Racist Organisation and City.

As part of this Committees' Work Programme, we will in August be taking stock of 1st year of REC report.

The Director of Children's Services (DCS) and the Chair of the Education, Children and Families Committee acknowledged the concerns raised by the group of young people a month ago and committed to keeping them up to date with progress on improving our anti-racist approach.

The Director of Children's Services with Learn Sheffield has written to all schools and offered an open invitation to all leaders particularly leaders and aspirant Black, Asian, Minoritised Ethnic leaders to discuss opportunities and barriers to progression in Sheffield. Over 15 leaders and aspirant leaders have been in contact. The DCS is progressing conversations looking to form a small working group in the autumn term to formulate a co-produced action plan to improve leadership and opportunities across the education system.

In addition work is taking place with Learn Sheffield to increase the diversity of Governing Bodies and Boards of Trustees including representation from ethnic Black, Asian, Minoritised Ethnic leaders and also of a younger age. The outcome is to increase representation from local communities and increase the number of Governors/Trustees of Schools who are people of colour and also to increase the number of under 30 year olds who are on the Boards and Trusts of Schools in our City.

The DCS has also committed to contact the group of young people on a monthly basis to update them on progress. This communication is being sent out this week which is in line with the agreed timeframe.

2. Do the members of the Sheffield City Council recognise what they have contributed to systemic and institutionalised racism within the Sheffield education system?

Answer: The Race Equality Commission set out clearly the way in which the education system in the city is racialised and made a number of clear recommendations for change across all aspects of the city's education system from leadership and management, to racial literacy amongst the education workforce, to specific recommendations around exclusions early years provision and teacher education.

This clearly also has very important implications for councillors, and it is incumbent on all members to understand their role within this, and do everything we can to listen, learn and go forward with purpose to become an anti-racist organisation.

3. How is Sheffield City Council going to ensure that the right training is given to officers and leaders so that equality and equity in leadership is in line with other major cities?

Answer: The City Council requires all officers to undertake mandatory learning and development around equality, diversity and inclusion and unconscious bias. Improving equality and equity in leadership is a key challenge for the city and one that we are determined to meet in line with our aspiration to become an anti-racist organisation and city.

4. How will the Sheffield City Council ensure its workforce reflects the communities it serves? What equitable changes will there be?

Answer: Sheffield City Council undertakes regular workforce monitoring to understand how reflective the workforce is of the communities we serve. That data was published as part of the Annual Equalities Report and considered by Strategy and Resources Committee at their meeting in April. That data shows that progress is being made but

that it is not fast enough and is patchy within different areas of work.

In particular that report noted the following: “Employees who identify as Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME) continues to trend upwards and are now 16.6%, up from 15.7% last year. However, it is still not in line with the local population and there is greater underrepresentation in professional and management grades 6-11. This has likely resulted in less representation in progression and promotion and higher grades”

5. How is the Sheffield City Council helping schools across Sheffield decolonise their curriculums and traditional learning methods to allow POC students to feel represented?

Answer: The Director of Children Services (DCS) is establishing a working group with Leaders and Aspirant Black, Asian, Minoritised Ethnic leaders in the Autumn Term and will discuss these points with the group. This also clearly needs an input from students, and I will take this up with the DCS.

6. Have members of the Sheffield City Council directly spoken to POC teachers and students to know if they feel protected by the council? Or is it just assumed.

Answer: The Director of Children Services (DCS) has written to all schools offering an open invitation to discuss opportunities and barriers for people of colour in the education system. She has been contacted by a number of people and is both arranging individual conversations as well as looking to establish a working group in the autumn term to both understand what is happening now in the system as well as co-producing an action plan based on lived experience which will look to move the education system towards an anti-racist system.

7. Despite the Lowcock report and the council pledging to be more transparent and accountable does this only apply to some communities and not others. I submitted 3 FOI requests which were all refused requesting emails from Council officer relating to a school in Sheffield. This request was refused. I asked for the request to be refined so that they could give me the information I needed but under the required costs. This was ignored. Instead the council offered me an SLA, a document that I did not request. I appealed to the ICO. They agreed and said the council should help me refine the request. The council was meant to respond to me by the 12th June. I've received nothing. Why is it acceptable to just deny requests to refine a request. What are you hiding?

Answer: We take our obligations under the Freedom of Information Act seriously and believe in the importance of openness and honesty in all that we do as an organisation.

In this instance we invited you to refine your request so that it does not exceed the cost of compliance. We were given a deadline by the Information Commissioner's Office to respond of 20 June 2023 (not 12 June 2023). We contacted you on 26 June 2023 due to a busy period in our Inbox, apologising to you and the Information Commissioner. I understand you have refined your request and have been advised that you will receive a response by 24 July 2023. I would like to apologise for the delay in the response being provided and will commit to ensuring that this is done by 24 July 2023.

8. Do council officers agree that making judgements about a person's ability to do a job,

without ever meeting them, amounts to discrimination?

Answer: In general terms, the council operates a standard recruitment process whereby candidates are invited to complete an application form before progressing to formal interview. Application forms have any personal information about the applicant redacted at the point of shortlisting to reduce the likelihood of unconscious biases influencing which candidates proceed to interview.

It would not be possible to offer every candidate an interview, but we would never offer a job to any candidate without meeting them at interview first.

Any decisions about people in existing roles should follow the proper processes.

As we have accepted in the answers to other questions we know that in some areas we still have improvements to make. It would be possible to have a separate conversation on individual cases.

9. Is the REC just a tick box exercise? How can you really want to make a difference when senior education officers do not understand what discrimination looks like?

Answer: It is not a tick box exercise. The council takes the implementation of the Race Equality Commission recommendations. The Strategy and Resources Committee agreed an action plan to take forward those recommendations for the council at its meeting in December 2022 and will receive its first update report at the meeting to be held on 2 August.

10. When the Sheffield City Council is proven guilty in contributing to discrimination to POC teachers in leadership positions and not protecting them - will they publicly acknowledge their mistakes and apologise to our community and the specific teachers involved?

Answer: Decisions about employees in schools are made by Governing Bodies and Boards of Trustees. That being said Sheffield City Council wants to ensure that any advice and support to schools and Governing Bodies is of the best quality and always looks to learn.

5.2 Ruth Hubbard (on behalf of Russell Johnson) attended to present the following questions that Mr Johnson had submitted:

1. In recent meetings since you became Leader, myself and others have asked you about the disregard of the powerful Motion passed at the ECM regarding the position of certain Members following the excoriating Lowcock Report.

For some reason you have not answered. Therefore, reworded, I'll make another attempt:

If you and your Party were committed to democratic processes in Governance (both of the Council and Party) surely it follows that the Members referred to in that Motion should stand down?

If you feel able to defend the continuing positions of the six Members to whom the Motion applies, please try do so.

Answer: I think it's important to stress again that at the ECM on May 10th, we heard from Sir Mark Lowcock, and he offered us his view that he is sceptical of the value of relitigating things that happened in the dispute and cautioned that this is not likely to help us very much to move forward.

I agree. Having identified a number of lessons from the dispute, the task now is to learn from them and to look forward.

As the new Leader, I am focused on that task. I expect that all elected members, in my party and others, and all officers understand the seriousness of what happened during this dispute and commit to work together to ensure a dispute of this magnitude can never happen again.

This was my position last week, and it will remain my position. I take onboard what Sir Mark on has said with the utmost importance and am under no illusions as to how hard and long the process of reconciliation will be, but we must remain committed to this with all our resolve.

2. I have also sought to explore the subject of this question recently. Again, you not only failed to answer, but wilfully obfuscated. Here goes with another attempt, reworded for clarity and ease of comprehension!

(i) Whilst I understand that there can be no compulsion, would it be desirable for the Leader and CEx to publicly request apologies from appropriate former Members and Officers, taking responsibility for their culpabilities in the Street Tree Scandal? If not please explain properly, rather than insulting the questioner with obtuse 'non-answers'.

Answer: The Council has apologised repeatedly over the last few months for the harms caused by the street trees dispute. As is completely correct, and on behalf of the Council I have also made numerous apologies. Which I stand by. The Council as a whole, and some officers and Members who were in post at the time, got things badly wrong. I do not shy away from that.

The Inquiry held the Council as an entity responsible for this and it is the Council as a organisation which will need to learn, change and ensure this never happens again –

Ultimately the best apology we can give Sheffield in the long-term is evidence that we have changed.

It is not for me as somebody who was not involved at the time to demand apologies from any individual who is no longer part of Sheffield City Council.

(ii) Does Cllr Hunt agree with me that the gesture would itself, even if there were nil response, help to complement and enhance the general apology already published?

Answer: As stated above, this is a matter purely for those individuals. As I mentioned before, it is my role as Leader to ensure that as an organisation we go forward with

openness, integrity and honesty and that the best apology we can give to the city in the long-term is evidence that we have changed. As I've been consistent in saying, words alone are not enough, they must be matched by actions.

3. Nolan (9, 10) advises thus:

- I do not bring my role or local authority into disrepute.
- ... you should work ... openly and transparently.

(i) Do you accept that The Nolan Principles should be a guide for Council Leaders?

Answer: Yes

(ii) Do you accept that your recent performance responding to Public Questioners – i.e. failing address the questioners' concerns, constitutes a clear breach of both of those Principles?

Answer: No I do not accept that, and I am sorry that you feel that way. I have answered the questions to the best of my ability and, no matter how difficult, I have answered all questions put to me.

(iii) Do you agree with me that brazenly disregarding and dismissing a legitimately passed Motion (see Q1) constitutes further Nolan contraventions, breaches the SCC Members' CoC, and undermines democratic principles?

Answer: No – and I will refer you to my previous answer as to why.

(iv) Will he arrange a meeting with me and other members of the public whom he serves to discuss these important matters?

Answer: I will always make myself available to respond to the city's residents. I do not, however, feel that there have been any contraventions of the Nolan principles from myself in this regard, and would not have anything further to add on that but I think we can both agree that asking similar questions is likely to lead to the same answers and if a meeting provides a chance to have a more fruitful discussion then I would be happy to meet.

5.3 Ruth Hubbard (on behalf of Justin Buxton) attended to present the following questions that Mr Buxton had submitted:

1. Further to a question I asked at the Full Council meeting on 5th July this year and the subsequent, obviously deliberate obfuscation and conceit of the response.

There is clearly still a failure to adhere to the spirit of the Nolan Principles and an audacious display of an appalling and continued arrogant culture by the Leadership, resulting in a public response perpetuating the democratic deficit that has plagued Sheffield and its governance.

At the Extraordinary Council meeting held on 10th May to 'Consider the implications of the Street Tree Inquiry on the city, SCC and councillors involved in the decision making at that time.'

The following resolution was passed:

That the Council 'Believes that for individuals who were council cabinet members in the civic years 2015/16 to 2017/18, resignation from public office would be an appropriate indication of acceptance of responsibility for harms caused.'

Please could the Council specify and detail the democratic procedure followed and invoked to allow the intentional disregard of a previous democratic vote by the Council when appointing a councillor to an official office when they were member of the Cabinet identified in the resolution quoted and passed previously.

Answer: For clarity, the motion passed at the Extraordinary Council Meeting referred to in the question was advisory and not binding on any Elected Member

All offices for the 2023-24 municipal year were appointed to properly, in line with the Council's constitution and the law. Appointments to the offices of Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor were made unanimously by the Full Council at the AGM.

2. Tom Hunt has previously stated on record:

"It would not be accurate to describe the street tree replacement programme as either wholly policy or wholly necessary to carry out those statutory duties."

This would confirm that the felling of healthy street trees was not 'wholly necessary' to carry out statutory duties in all instances.

Will the Council be referring itself to the Forestry Commission regarding this matter, in view of their investigation in to the legality of the programme being severely hampered by identified failures in record keeping by the Council and Amey, also bearing in mind the 'Lowcock Inquiry report' found that the Council misled Courts, the media and citizens?

Answer: In line with the response to the Inquiry report agreed by this Committee on the 19 June, the Council emailed the Forestry Commission the Council's full apology and in that email also drew their attention to the Council's response to the Inquiry. Should they have any further questions or observation we will respond to those.

As Sir Mark Lowcock said in his remarks to Full Council, the street tree inquiry represents a comprehensive and thorough examination of all of the evidence held regarding the street trees disputes. It made a number of stark findings and clear recommendations for the future. Sir Mark warned against seeking to relitigate the work of the inquiry, which he believed would not be a positive step for the city. I agree with him. Referring ourselves to the Forestry Commission at this stage would have no benefit.

5.4 Ruth Hubbard attended to present the following questions that she had submitted:

1. Please can you clarify the status of motions passed at meetings of full council and their binding nature on individual Members of the council, political party groupings, and

the Chief Executive and other officers. Who is required, and who is empowered, to take action if motions passed in Council and their direct implications are not followed through on, or where decisions are then undermined by subsequent actions or appointments? What recourse do members of the public have in such instances?

Answer: The role of Full Council motions is to discuss and debate issues of concern to the council. As agreed in the constitution, they are advisory and non-binding in nature and cannot commit the council to financial expenditure or create new policy. They are also not binding on any subsequent meeting of Full Council. This is because Council motions do not receive formal officer advice in the same way that a decision report considered by a committee, and because Full Council has decided that decision-making should be delegated to individual policy committees. Council motions are therefore advisory and will usually request the relevant policy committee to consider the matter further, with the benefit of full officer advice. This is true of Strategy and Resources and any policy committee.

In respect of paragraph 12 of the motion passed at the ECM on May 10th what actions have been taken by Members or party political groupings or by officers of the council to pursue or require the actions referred to in this paragraph? If the answer is none then - apart from bringing the council into disrepute or undermining its own legitimacy - what are the implications?

Answer: No action has been taken by council officers in respect of paragraph 12 of the motion. As I have said before I think it's important to stress what we heard from Sir Mark Lowcock at the ECM, and he offered us his view that he is sceptical of the value of relitigating things that happened in the dispute and cautioned that this is not likely to help us very much to move forward.

I agree. Having identified a number of lessons from the dispute, the task now is to learn from them and to look forward.

2. On 31st May Strategy and Resources Committee received a report on the Strategic Framework. Amongst other things this introduces the Future Sheffield programme and the Strategy and Resources Committee set up a cross-party working group to oversee this. Clearly Future Sheffield has ambition and I appreciate the council also probably wants this work to evolve and be responsive. The brief bullet points listed as aspirations or outcomes are clearly wide-ranging and of public interest. It seems this work is also relevant to, and arguably might well cut across (and some people might say potentially undermine), ongoing work in Policy and other committees. There was a lack of information and clarity about how all this is intended to work, specific objectives and how they will be measured (for example) and, once again, the public seem to come at the very end of the food chain where it's imagined people might - somehow - tell you if it's working or not. As I say, I appreciate it will be evolving but are there lots of meetings happening behind closed doors? If so, how can that be made more transparent so that people know what's going on and can see who is involved, and what's on the table and being worked on - how will reporting work, both to committees who all look like they might be affected, and externally. This is an ask for more information and clarity in the public domain.

Answer: Thank you for your question with regards to the Future Sheffield Programme,

which is the city council's programme for organisational development, improvement and change. The first phase of the programme has focused on a review and redesign of the strategic leadership and management of the authority with the final appointments to this structure currently underway. As this phase of the programme reaches its completion the focus has moved to development and implementation of actions resulting from our peer review, Street Trees Inquiry, the Race Equality Commission and other reports setting out the key building blocks or foundations upon which to develop the council.

These include development of a digital strategy, a new people (workforce) strategy, and a new approach to employee engagement. Work is underway to develop these strategies alongside a new approach to performance management and public reporting. Work continues on the implementation of our Budget Improvement Plans (BIPS) for 23/24 and the development of a medium-term financial plan. Updates and draft documents will be provided to the Strategy and Resources Committee at their Autumn meetings covering this phase of the programme.

As your question acknowledges, Future Sheffield is ambitious and wide ranging and will evolve. Future phases of the programme will focus on transformation and improvement, closely aligned to the new city goals and new Corporate Plan. These future phases will be more externally focused than our early work and are currently in the formative stages of development. As well as having Senior Officer assurance, Councillor Fran Belbin (Deputy Leader) will be the Member Lead for Future Sheffield and will be establishing a cross party working group to focus on the Future Sheffield Programme.

We expect to directly engage committees in the proposals where they fall within the remit of a committee and we also expect the Strategy and Resources Committee and the cross-party Member Working Group to keep an overview of the development and progress of the programme in its entirety alongside tracking of relevant measures such as performance, savings or other benefits (for example satisfaction, efficiency, productivity). A report including outline scope and themes for next phases of the programme will be provided to the Strategy and Resources Committee in November 2023.

3. In the annual meeting and in last full council the meeting received reports on member appointments to outside bodies, boards and the like. These appointments are made to a whole range of organisations with different legal structures, but including to some in the charitable / VCS sector. What guidance, rules or briefing do councillors receive about their appointments to outside organisations, particularly in the voluntary or charitable sector? I found old guidance from 2012 but could not see anything later, or that refers to this in the last ten years. Can you clarify the nature of these external appointments and reassure the public that they (nor in general terms relationships with VCS organisations and groups) are not, nor should be, used for party political influence or gain, or to interfere with or compromise the rights and independence of those organisations. How would you know if inappropriate influence or interference was being exercised?

Answer: Elected Members are bound at all times by the Councillor Code of Conduct when undertaking any official duties as councillor. Members are required to operate in a way that is in line with the Nolan Principles on standards in public life, free from bias, not seeking to use their position improperly to the advantage or disadvantage of anyone

else. This would include ensuring that Members should not use such appointments for party political influence or gain, or to compromise the rights and independence of those organisations. Members are required to disclose and register any interests that they may have.

Were there to be any such inappropriate influence then it could be investigated as a standards matter if a complaint were made. Where members are appointed in a personal capacity then they are bound by the constitution and the rules of those organisations and will owe them legal duties. Any breaches of those would be a matter for those organisations.

The latest guidance available is from 2012. I will ask the Governance Committee to consider whether this should be placed on their work programme to review.

5.5 Woll Newall attended to present the following questions that he had submitted:

During the period of the street tree scandal and the citizen-led change of governance Petition & Referendum campaigns, the ruling Labour group was elected with the support of less than 10% of the electorate. Decisions were forced on the city by secret votes only involving Labour councillors, and requiring just a simple majority of councillors within the Labour Group (ie decisions only needed the support of a faction of Labour councillors representing less than 5% of the electorate). The views of a large number of local Labour Party members, all across the city, were ignored when these decisions were made. Many Labour councillors were forced to support decisions they disagreed with, prevented from voicing their real views, and prevented from carrying out the job they are elected to do - properly representing the views of their constituents. Local Labour Party members were bullied into silence if they didn't agree with these decisions.

We know that Labour councillors and members resigned because of the toxic way the Labour Group was run during the tree scandals, and we know that many Labour councillors & members disagreed with decisions on the trees, and its decision to campaign against the change to a Committee System (ignoring the advice of national experts who told the council that it should not waste precious money on holding a Referendum because it would be successful).

During this period a faction in Sheffield Labour Party forced illegitimate decisions onto the whole city, and Labour councillors, Labour Party officials and local Labour MPs broke the Nolan Principles, bullied and made false statements to citizens - all without consequence or punishment.

The rules and procedures of the Sheffield Labour Party allowed and encouraged these scandalous events to happen. Labour Party officials and councillors failed to properly police behaviour within their Party. Labour councillors failed to (or felt they couldn't) put their democratic duty to their constituents before the factionalism of their Party. There was a failure of governance within the Council (that has been acknowledged following the Lowcock Report) but there were also fatal governance failures within the Sheffield Labour Party. There is nothing to prevent these failings reoccurring unless real and concrete improvements are made to both organisations.

Worryingly, Sheffield Labour (under the secret control of Labour head office) was very

clear in this year's local election campaign that its aim is to regain an absolute majority in the Council, explicitly so that it can force its decisions through on its own (bypassing the democratic way of working within the committee system). Labour election adverts and Labour door knockers were both explicit about this. It is very possible that the Labour Party can achieve this aim with the support of only 10% of the electorate.

Given this, citizens will be rightly suspicious that statements by some in Sheffield Labour about its enthusiastic support for the committee system, and having turned over a new leaf, are rather meaningless without concrete changes to Sheffield Labour Party's rules and procedures (and the rigorous policing of those rules) that could actually prevent the disastrous and undemocratic failings from reoccurring.

Words alone are not enough to give citizens the confidence that real change has been made. What specific changes have been made to the rules and procedures of the Sheffield Labour Party, the Labour Councillors Group and the Sheffield Labour Constituency Parties, and how those rules are policed, to prevent these democratic, legitimacy and governance failures from happening again?

Answer: Thank you for your question. Though I have only been a councillor for a little over a year, it is clear to see huge mistakes were made in the past. I have promised that as Leader of Sheffield Labour Councillors it is a priority of mine to serve the people of Sheffield and work collaboratively to ensure that politics in Sheffield is conducted in a competent, open and inclusive way. This is the way Labour councillors will conduct themselves internally and externally. Rules pertaining to the Labour Party are an internal party matter.

On the Committee System. This is the only system of governance I have worked within at the Council. I fully welcome and embrace the new model. But of course, changing the governance model will always be a work in progress, and this is why the Governance Review is on-going. We all want to see this work to the best of its ability – and to ensure greater democratic oversight and public engagement.

I'll be clear that I want Labour to have a majority on the council. I think its important to be honest about this and I am sure that my cross-party colleagues will agree that they too are keen to win elections.

But let me provide assurance that our committee system means that whoever is in power and however they are in power, all 84 councillors have a role in our governing arrangements.

5.6 Benoit Compin attended to present the following questions that he had submitted:

1. When would this council be willing to rectify the incorrect statements it had made at court during the trial against an individual and others?

Answer: As agreed at the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting on 19 June we have put in place a process for making apologies to anyone who was affected by the street trees dispute. As part of this an apology can be requested by emailing streettreesresponse@sheffield.gov.uk

While the Inquiry found that the outcomes of legal action would have been the same without the Council's version of the 5-year tree management strategy, misleading the Courts is a very serious matter for which we are apologising to the Courts.

2. Would this council be willing to examine the piece of evidence (commissioned by the council itself) supporting the above claim?

Answer: As above – this can be considered as part of the apology process.

3. Is this council interested at all in bringing justice to the people it has wronged?

Answer: The Council has issued a full apology for its actions during the street trees dispute and has put in place a mechanism for making apologies to individuals affected. It has also implemented and gone further than the inquiry's recommendations around writing off and repaying Court financial orders, and committed to supporting the small number of people found in breach of the injunctions to help mitigate any ongoing challenges they face. Together we hope that these actions will demonstrate the council's remorse and go some way to providing justice for those who were affected by its actions during the dispute.

4. How does this council seek to commit to prison members of the public for repeated breaches of an injunction, but does very little when members of this council commit repeated breaches of the code of conduct and of this council's own Constitution?

Answer: The decision to seek injunctions against protestors and then bring committal proceedings was ill-advised and is something that we have already apologised for. Breaches of the code of conduct can and are investigated through the council's standards process.

6. RETIREMENT OF STAFF

6.1 The Director of Policy and Democratic Engagement submitted a report on Council staff retirements.

6.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That Strategy and Resources Policy Committee:-

(a) places on record its appreciation of the valuable services rendered to the City Council by the following staff in the Portfolios below:-

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Post</u>	<u>Years' Service</u>
<u>Adults Wellbeing and Care Services</u>			
	Marjorie Fee	Practice Development Officer	36

Children's Services

Kathryn Barker	Administrative Sheffield Centre	Officer, Inclusion	24
Adrienne Betts	Senior Assistant Watercliffe Community School	Teaching Level 3, Meadow Primary	52
Stephen Crabtree	Deputy Shooters School	Headteacher, Grove Primary	31
Anne Hopkins	Senior Assistant Lydgate Infant	Teaching Level 3, School	30
Jill Piddington	Cleaner, Primary School	Springfield	20
Angela Ryan	Senior Assistant Springfield School	Teaching Level 3, Primary	21
Kim Walsh	Premises Watercliffe Community School	Manager, Meadow Primary	26

City Futures

Sally Heaviside	Planning Officer		38
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Neighbourhood Services

David Jackson	Operational Assistant	Delivery	50
Nicholas Sellers	Technical Programme Works Leader	and Team	39

Strategic Support Services

John Turner	Democratic Officer	Services	40
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(b) extend to them its best wishes for the future and a long and happy retirement;

and

(c) direct that an appropriate extract of the resolution now made, under the Common Seal of the Council, be forwarded to those staff with over 20 years' service.

7. WORK PROGRAMME

7.1 The Committee received a report containing the Committee's Work Programme for consideration and discussion. The aim of the Work Programme is to show all known, substantive agenda items for forthcoming meetings of the Committee, to enable this committee, other committees, officers, partners and the public to plan their work with and for the Committee. It was highlighted that this is a live document and Members input to it was invaluable. The inclusion of the Committee's Priority Issues for 2023/24 in the Work Programme document was welcomed and it was noted that the inclusion of our Net Zero ambitions in such priorities would be investigated.

7.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That Strategy and Resources Policy Committee:- agrees that:-

(a) the Committee's work programme, as set out in Appendix 1 be agreed, including the additions and amendments identified in Part 1 of the report;

(b) Members give consideration to any further issues to be explored by officers for inclusion in Part 2 of Appendix 1 of the next work programme report, for potential addition to the work programme;

(c) approval be given to the consideration of cross cutting issues as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report; and

(c) the referrals from Council (petition and resolutions) detailed in Section 2 of the report be noted and the proposed responses set out be agreed.

8. SUPPORTING THE PEOPLE OF SHEFFIELD THROUGH THE COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS

8.1 The Director of Policy and Democratic Engagement submitted a report that provides an update on the cross-partner response to the Cost-of-Living Crisis. It summarises the support we have put in place to date and how we have implemented the action plan and recommendations agreed by this committee in previous reports in May and July 2022.

The report makes recommendations relating to how we can learn from and build on the work already done to continue to support communities with the challenges ahead. Including plans to:

- Invest £400,000 across the LACs, ringfenced to address the cost-of-living crisis
- Build on our Welcome Places model to support communities across the city
- Arm frontline staff with the information they need to link communities with the right support when they need it
- Make it easier for the people who need it most to access £10.4 million Household

Support Fund and other hardship support over the coming year

- Improve access to food using £150,000 of South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority funding to support food banks -and community pantries in our neighbourhoods.

The report outlines our approach to planning for the upcoming winter, data insights about the continuing impacts of Cost-of-Living crisis on our city and how this work can contribute to a long-term, strategic plan to prevent and reduce poverty and inequality in Sheffield.

The meeting noted the motion agreed at the Council meeting held on 5 July 2023 requesting that the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee considers allocating from unallocated resources from the 2023/24 budget setting process, an additional £600,000 to assist the response to the cost-of-living crises. It was noted that the Cost-of-Living strategy group would consider the use of the funding identified in that motion and that a further report would be submitted to this Committee following that discussion.

8.2 RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That Strategy and Resources Policy Committee:-

(a) notes the approach and work undertaken to respond to the Cost-of-Living Crisis to date, in line with the strategy agreed by Strategy and Resources Committee, and approve a continuation of the cross-partner incident response arrangement and governance structure;

(b) notes the insights from our data dashboard and the latest available research, what it tells us about the impact of the Cost-of-Living Crisis across Sheffield and the likely impact over the year ahead;

(c) agrees the approach to planning for the winter ahead, including plans to develop and sustain welcome places, learn lessons from the past year and build on the infrastructure we've put in place;

(d) agrees that Strategy and Resources Committee will receive further updates on the response; and

(e) notes that the funding for the Cost-of-Living Support Hub ends in March 2024 and endorse the proposed work to develop a long-term strategic approach to preventing and reducing poverty and inequality in Sheffield.

8.3 Reasons for Decision

8.3.1 The recommendations build on the commitments made by the Strategy and Resources Committee to support Sheffielders through the cost-of-living crisis. Working with communities and partners across the city, the recommendations ensure that SCC will continue to play a leading role through the strategic and tactical incident type response

8.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected

- 8.4.1 Stop our response. Dismissed as supporting our communities and businesses through the cost-of-living crisis is critical to the wellbeing of our city. We are committed to standing alongside communities in the face of the crisis.
- 8.4.2 Continue as is. Sustain our response as is the current. Dismissed as while there has been some excellent collaboration to support our communities, we need to continue to review and adapt our approach in response to the changing crisis. Further, we need to focus on the forthcoming challenge of winter 2023/24 and pivoting towards a longer term, sustained approach to tackling poverty in Sheffield.
- 8.4.3 Move to a wholly preventative approach. Rejected because of continuing acute need to provide support for people facing crisis now and in the immediate future.

9. HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND SCHEME

- 9.1 The Executive Director Neighbourhood Services submitted a report:
 - 1. To update Strategy and Resources Committee on the “Cost-of-Living Cohort Analysis” including findings on cohorts most affected by the cost-of-living crisis and financial inequalities, as requested by the Committee in April 2023;
 - 2. To seek the Committee’s approval to spend the Household Support Fund from DWP in line with the spending plan detailed in this report and as guided by findings of the Cohort Analysis;
 - 3. To seek this Committee’s approval to make changes to the application scheme as detailed in this report;
 - 4. To inform the committee of future considerations and decisions that would need to be made should the Household Support Fund grant be discontinued in March 2024; and
 - 5. To seek approval for ringfencing £700,000 that the Director of Communities will be able to use to respond flexibly to the Cost-of-Living issues
- 9.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That Strategy and Resources Policy Committee:-
 - (a) approves the spending plan for Free School Meal Vouchers for 23/24 as detailed in the report;
 - (b) approves the targeted award to households who are in receipt of Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Support but not benefits from DWP or HMRC and therefore not receiving Cost of Living payments;
 - (c) approves the spending plan and changes to the grant application scheme as detailed in the report;
 - (d) approves ringfencing of £700,000 from the Housing Support Fund that is to be used in the period July 2023 to March 2024 by the Director of Communities to respond flexibly to Cost of Living issues and; to the extent not already covered by

existing delegations, delegate authority to the Director of Communities in consultation with the Director of Finance and Commercial Services and the General Counsel, to make decisions on spending this money in order to meet the aims and objections in this report; and

(e) notes the Household Support Fund runs ends in March 2024 with no guarantee that it will be extended beyond that point.

9.3 **Reasons for Decision**

9.3.1 The recommendations presented to the Strategy and Resources Committee will enable Sheffield City Council to provide the funds to support vulnerable households in the city to meet immediate needs and help those who are struggling to afford food, energy and water bills, and other related essentials through the cost-of-living crisis.

9.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

9.4.1 This report provides a detailed proposal and delivery that officers, in consultation with elected members, believe to be the best way of delivering the Household Support Fund.

10. **SHEFFIELD FOOD STRATEGY AND FUTURE COMMISSIONING MODEL FOR IMPROVING DIET/OBESITY PREVENTION 2024-2029**

10.1 The Director of Public Health submitted a report providing an overview of and seek approval for 'Fairer, Healthier, Greener' the proposed new Food Strategy for Sheffield. The report invites member input on areas of the Food Strategy that should be prioritised by Sheffield City Council (the Council) during its implementation in order to maximise its contribution to corporate goals including Net Zero, better health and reducing inequalities.

The report also provides an overview of the proposed new commissioning model for improving diet and preventing obesity 2024-29 which forms an integral part of the new Food Strategy's implementation.

The report also then outlines and seeks approval for the recommended initiatives that will be supported by the annual investment proposed of £658,000 per year for 5 years (£3.29m in total) from the Public Health grant allocation

10.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That Strategy and Resources Policy Committee:-

(a) approves the food strategy 'Fairer, Healthier, Greener: A Food Strategy for Sheffield';

(b) commits to developing policy regarding food served in council owned spaces so that it reflects the aspirations set out in 'Fairer, Healthier, Greener';

(c) acknowledges the Council's commitment to working with local communities and partners to identify spaces where sustainable food production and provision can

be accommodated;

(d) approves the 'improving diet, preventing obesity proposed commissioning model 2024-29';

(e) approves the allocation of £658,000 per year, for the next 5 years, (£3.29m in total) as outlined in this report; and

(f) approves the commissioning of the Tier 2 child and adult weight management contract, as outlined in this report.

10.3 Reasons for Decision

10.3.1 The proposal set before the Strategy and Resources Committee is the preferred option because:

10.3.2 Poverty, poor diet and the impacts of climate change are some of the most serious public health challenges of the 21st century. Current local trends for dietary indicators and obesity are worsening in many cases and inequalities are widening. Without action, the health of individuals and of our planet will continue to worsen, health inequalities associated with poor diet obesity will persist and the economic and social costs will increase to unsustainable levels.

10.3.3 The proposed improving nutrition and obesity prevention commissioning model 2024-2029 is based on analysis of local need, reviews of existing local initiatives, service user feedback, and draws on good practice and evidence of what works. It builds on learning from the 2019-2024 commissioning strategy and represents a refinement of this approach within the available funding rather than being a radical departure.

10.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected

10.4.1 Renew the 2018 Food Strategy. The 2018 Food Strategy had a primary focus on nutrition. A motion was passed in 2021 which committed the Council to develop a new Food Strategy which a broader set of outcomes. The new Food Strategy also better reflects the Council's Net Zero aspirations and has been updated to take account of the significant impact of the pandemic and subsequent cost of living crisis on people's ability to access nutritious food.

10.4.2 Re-commission or extend current contracts and initiatives at the current level of funding. The broad approach to tackling poor diet and obesity is to remain the same as it continues to reflect an evidence based, whole-systems approach. However, as outlined in this report, service reviews and analysis of Sheffield's programme for improving diet and preventing obesity identified some cost pressures, opportunities for efficiencies and gaps in activity which can be partially addressed through re-profiling of funding across the priorities.

10.4.3 Bring weight management services in house. It is recommended that weight management services be put out to open tender as has been the case since these services were first established. Going through an open tender process will enable

us to ensure value for money and secure an external provider with specialist expertise and experience delivering this service.

11. LOCAL LAND CHARGES - PROPOSED FEE INCREASES

11.1 The Chief Operating Officer submitted a report seeking approval to increase Local Land Charges fees charged in accordance with the relevant legislation. Local Land Charges team provide property information to customers to support the conveyancing process of residential and commercial property.

11.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That Strategy and Resources Policy Committee:-

(a) approves the proposed increase to the fees charged by the Local Land Charges Team in accordance with Table, set out in the report, from 1st August 2023; and

(b) delegates to the General Council annual changes to the Local Land Charges fees, on a cost recovery basis in consultation with the Section 151 officer.

11.3 Reasons for Decision

11.3.1 Recovering the costs of these services enables the Local Land Charges Team to continue to provide an excellent service to customers, supporting property transactions within Sheffield.

11.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected

11.4.1 If the fees are not increased to continue to recover the costs of providing these services, the service will be subsidised from core funding which is already under significant pressure. Where statute allows for the cost of a service to be recovered from the customer, and council undercovers those costs, this impacts on the council's ability to provide other services to the people of Sheffield.

12. EXTENSION OF THE DYNAMIC PURCHASING SCHEME (DPS) FOR TRANSPORT SERVICES

12.1 The Executive Director, Neighbourhood Services submitted a report seeking approval to commission transport provision for a period of up to 5 years (until July 2028). The report sets out transport services delivered by the Council and those who benefit from such services. The report also sets out the need for transport services and explain why a further 5 years of service provision is required.

12.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That Strategy and Resources Policy Committee approves the commissioning of transport services from private transport contractor providers for the next 5 years, with an estimated value of £45.4m, as set out in the report now submitted.

12.3 Reasons for Decision

12.3.1 The commissioning strategy will ensure continuous delivery of transport services

to meet the needs of the young people. The commissioning strategy will ensure the Council can fulfil its statutory SEND home to school transport responsibility and delivery of the Council's objective of "Happy young people who have the start they need for the future they want".

- 12.3.2 The intention to extend the current DPS (subject to separate Council approval) will continue the control on the cost per seat.
- 12.3.3 The commissioning strategy will continue to support local transport businesses and local people.
- 12.3.4 The commissioning strategy will provide the opportunity for the Council to support local transport businesses and help guide them on their carbon reduction journey.

12.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

- 12.4.1 Option 1 – Do nothing. This is not a realistic option as the control that the current arrangements provide would be lost. This would lead to a financially unsustainable and operationally inefficient service. It would also put the council in a position that no longer aligns to our strategic objectives in terms of the environment and lower emissions. The council would also be in breach of its statutory duties if it could not provide a SEND Home to school transport service
- 12.4.2 Option 2 – Revise the commissioning strategy so only ULEV and EV vehicles can be used for the provision of transport. This is not an option. The in-house fleet is CAZ compliant but the available vehicles on the private contractor fleet that meet this criterion are currently very limited. This would mean that the Council would not be able to fulfil the demand and thus would not be able to meet its statutory obligations in terms of transport.
- 12.4.3 Option 3 – Provide in-house. This is not a viable option. Due to the increase in demand the current fleet is near its capacity. In order to cover the work that is currently serviced by the DPS contract the council would have to increase its fleet size considerably and have a number of vehicles that would only have a unique use for this service. In turn this would mean the council would lose the flexibility that the DPS has to offer.
- 12.4.4 It is worth noting that the introduction of the Clean Air Zone (CAZ) will impact positively on current taxi provision by increasing the number of CAZ compliant vehicles used.