

SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

Strategy and Resources Policy Committee

Meeting held 17 April 2024

PRESENT: Councillors Tom Hunt (Chair), Fran Belbin (Deputy Chair), Angela Argenzio, Dawn Dale, Dianne Hurst (Group Spokesperson), Douglas Johnson (Group Spokesperson), Ben Miskell, Shaffaq Mohammed (Group Spokesperson), Zahira Naz, Joe Otten and Martin Smith

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Penny Baker and Richard Williams.

2. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

2.1 The public and press will be excluded from the meeting before discussion takes place on item 13 on the agenda on the grounds that, if the public and press were present during the transaction of such business, there would be a disclosure to them of exempt information as described in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended.

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 12 March 2024 were approved as a correct record.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

5.1 The Leader confirmed that a petition and a number of questions from members of the public had been received. However, due to the restrictions that must be observed during the pre-election period and following advice from the Monitoring Officer, these will be deferred to the next meeting of this Committee at the end of May, after the election.

The Chief Executive read out the following statement:

As the Leader has mentioned, we have received a number of public questions for today's policy committee which, following consideration by the Monitoring Officer, have all been deferred to the next meeting. I would like to take a few minutes of the committee's time to explain why those decisions, which as Chief Executive I support, have been made.

The period from the notice of election being published until polling day is

known as the pre-election period and is when local authorities are required to take additional care in the issuing of publicity of all forms to avoid anything that could give rise to a perception of favouring one candidate or political party. This period of heightened sensitivity - or PERP (Pre-Election Restrictions on Publicity) – applies both at local and national elections.

Guidance has been issued to Members and senior officers about what may and may not be done during the PERP period. This includes ensuring that press releases and statements are factual, and that Members are not quoted; that officers do not attend site visits that Members will be present at; not beginning new consultation activity; and not holding press conferences or photo opportunities that Members may be present at. The overall objective of PERP is to prevent council resources being used in a way that could be perceived to demonstrate support for a candidate or party at the election.

However, the normal business of the Council can and should continue during the PERP period. This includes the holding of meetings such as this one and continuing to take decisions, although particularly controversial or contentious issues should normally be deferred to a later agenda. The agenda for today's meeting has been carefully constructed to ensure that the decisions to be taken are not ones that are likely to prove politically controversial.

There is a provision in the council's constitution that all policy committee meetings have an agenda item to allow members of the public to ask questions and to receive answers from the chair of the committee. It is recognised that in the majority of cases members of the public are likely to wish to ask questions about matters that are politically contentious, and this will also be the case during the pre-election period. Asking such questions is not, in itself, likely to be a breach of PERP. However, providing responses to those questions, which would be prepared by officers, and given by Elected Members in a meeting administered, facilitated and resourced by council officers using taxpayers' money, could be considered to be a breach of the PERP guidance. As such, the Monitoring Officer has decided that all the public questions for today's meeting should not be asked as they deal with matters that are politically contentious, and will, instead, be deferred to the next meeting of the committee after the election.

Recognising this will be frustrating for those members of the public who hoped to be able to ask their questions today, we will consider what options there may be for ensuring greater clarity on the matter of public questions during PERP in future.

6. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

- 6.1 There were no Members' questions.

7. RETIREMENT OF STAFF

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

7.2 **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 Directorates below:-

<u>Name</u>	<u>Post</u>	<u>Years' Service</u>
<u>Adults Wellbeing and Care Services</u>		
Louise Chambers	Social Work Consultant	38
<u>Children's Services</u>		
Richard Green	Assistant Homes Manager	40
<u>City Futures</u>		
Rebecca Maddox	Head of Business Development and Strategy Project	22
<u>Neighbourhood Services</u>		
Russell Cooper	Material Resource Controller	42
Mark Freeth	Head of Repairs and Maintenance	39
John Gilpin	Woodlands Project Officer	33
John Gunnee	Community Technician - Electrician	36
John Maher	Principal Officer Commercial	33
Alan Orridge	Surveyor	40
Mark Parry	Environmental Enforcement Team Manager	43
Janet Sharpe	Director of Housing Services	43
<u>Strategic Support Services</u>		
Chris Ashforth	Assistant Finance Manager	39
Pauline Bennett	Revenues and Benefits Officer	39
Carole Gent	HR Consultant	38

(b) extend to them its best wishes for the future and a long and happy retirement; and

(c) directs 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.

8. WORK PROGRAMME

- 8.1 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.

It particular it was noted that the report contained a proposed response to the Council motion relating to "Five Years Since Declaring A Climate Emergency".

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

(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

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

9. SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL OUTCOMES AND PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK 2024-28

- 9.1 The Chief Operating officer submitted a report seeking approval for the refreshed Council Performance & Outcomes Framework 2024-28, as a companion to the new Council Plan, replacing the process and measures put in place to support the 2022/2023 Corporate Delivery Plan.

The Council Plan approval decision requested that officers prepare a new Outcomes Framework to support monitoring of performance against the Council Plan in early 2024. To allow continued transparency and assurance for Strategy and Resources Policy Committee on performance against the organisation's priorities through a refreshed set of Outcome Measures that reflect the intent of each priority in the Council Plan.

To ensure that Strategy and Resources Policy Committee can continue to contribute to the Performance System and drive improvement in the organisation. The new Performance Framework provides a system that promotes a culture of performance and delivery, a model for assurance and a golden thread that shows how all levels of the organisation can measurably contribute to the success of the Council Plan.

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

(a) agrees the Performance & Outcomes Framework as a companion to the new Council Plan, as set out in Appendix 1;

(b) agrees the Outcomes Framework as the way to understand measurable progress against each priority in the Council Plan, as set out in Appendix 2; and

(c) agrees to continue to receive quarterly and annual reports* that provide an overview of performance against the Outcome measures, describing performance challenges, interventions taken, and the results of changes made. Annually review measures in the context of progress. (*It is recognised that given the increased frequency, breadth and ambition of performance reporting. Future governance reviews may identify a more suitable Committee or sub-committee to consider the quarterly performance reports).

9.3 **Reasons for Decision**

9.3.1 The Performance & Outcomes Framework will underpin how we measure progress and monitor impact of the Council Plan. It is aligned to our four-year Medium Term Financial Strategy and the outcomes will increasingly become the focus for our budget, Directorate and Service Plans over the coming year.

9.3.2 The Council has a systematic process and a robust corporate performance management framework to track progress.

9.3.3 Directly responds to the LGA peer review recommendations around performance management and alignment with council strategic priorities.

9.3.4 To ensure that Strategy and Resources Policy Committee contributes to the performance management process and drives improvement across the organisation.

9.3.5 Provides mandate for officers to proceed with implementing the full framework, including baseline and target setting for the selected outcomes measures and development of reporting infrastructure.

9.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

9.4.1 Do nothing – rejected – as set out in the Strategic Framework 2023/24, we are

committed to developing and agreeing a medium-term plan for the council that sets out what we want to achieve for the city in the coming years and how we will contribute to the City Goals. The Council Plan is part of our Policy Framework and a critical step in our continued development as an organisation, connecting the ambitions and priorities of the administration to our Medium-Term Financial Strategy, workforce plans, Council Performance Framework, and Directorate Plans. It also ensures that we deliver on one of the key recommendations of the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge, further demonstrating our strategic development and maturity as an organisation.

- 9.4.2 Extend the Corporate Delivery Plan performance arrangements – rejected – the Corporate Delivery Plan has provided vital stability and focus for the organisation over the last year, building on the One Year Plan, and bringing clear focus onto a number of key challenges that citizens wanted to see improve. However, the Corporate Delivery Plan was deliberately short term and as recommended by the LGA Peer Team, it is important to bring medium-term focus for the Council so that citizens, staff and partners understand our priorities and ambitions.

10. FUTURE SHEFFIELD – DIGITAL STRATEGY & CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE STRATEGY

- 10.1 The Chief Operating Officer presented a report proposing a new Customer Experience Strategy and Digital Strategy to be delivered under the Future Sheffield Programme, the Council's four-year transformation programme, which is aimed at improving service effectiveness and delivery across the organisation whilst creating a robust long-term financial plan for the Council.

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

(a) approves the Customer Experience Strategy attached to the report at Appendix A; and

(b) approves the Digital Strategy attached to the report at Appendix B

10.3 Reasons for Decision

- 10.3.1 The Customer Experience Strategy and Digital Strategy are key pillars the Council's four-year transformation programme, Future Sheffield, which is aimed at improving service effectiveness and delivery across the organisation whilst creating a robust long-term financial plan for the Council. The strategies will ensure an organisation wide approach to customer services and digital transformation. This will contribute to achieving the vision and priorities of the Council Plan.

10.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected

- 10.4.1 The Council could choose not to have either a Customer Experience Strategy or a Digital Strategy. This has been rejected because the strategies are

interlinked and together will contribute to successful delivery of the Council Plan through the Council's four-year transformation programme, Future Sheffield.

11. JOINT OMBUDSMAN COMPLAINT HANDLING CODE

- 11.1 The Executive Director Neighbourhood Services submitted a report setting out new, more closely aligned Complaint Handling Codes developed by the Housing Ombudsman (HO) and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO), providing best practice for the handling and management of all types of complaints.

The report outlines the features and implementation of the Codes, and the changes which they introduce. It also presents for approval revised Complaint Policy & Procedures which have been aligned to the new Ombudsman Complaint Handling Codes.

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

(i) approves the revised Sheffield City Council Complaint Handling Policy (April 2024) attached to this report at Appendix 1 for adoption with immediate effect to align to implementation of the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code;

(ii) approves the revised Sheffield City Council Complaint Handling Policy (September 2024) attached to this report at Appendix 1a for adoption with effect from 1st September 2024 to align to implementation of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code; and

(iii) approves corresponding changes to the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure attached to this report at Appendix 2.

(b) That Strategy and Resources Policy Committee recommends to Full Council that:-

(i) the role of the Deputy Leader of Council should include being the Lead Member for Customer Experience (including complaints) to promote a positive complaint handling culture;

(ii) the lead Member responsibility for complaints be reserved to Strategy and Resources Policy Committee, with specific responsibilities as described in Section 1.9 of this report; and

(iii) appropriate amendments are made to the Council's Constitution.

11.3 Reasons for Decision

- 11.3.1 Statutory compliance required for Housing & Repairs Services from 1 April 2024. Principles to be adopted across whole Council from 1 September 2024

to provide consistent standards across all complaints and demonstrate our commitment to improving complaint performance.

- 11.3.2 Improved governance and monitoring to ensure performance targets are improved.
- 11.3.3 Improved performance reporting/monitoring - both internally and externally, including an annual self-assessment (HO), and reporting and analysis of service improvements/learnings to the Strategy & Resources Committee.
- 11.3.4 Emphasis on the prioritisation of complaints and to engender a culture of listening and learning from complaints.
- 11.3.5 Revised and comprehensive Complaints Policy & Procedures are needed to align to the new Ombudsman Complaint Handling Codes. Council Policy was last updated in 2014.

11.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

- 11.4.1 The Council could choose not to update its own Complaint Handling Policy and Corporate Complaints Procedure or to implement the HO Complaint Handling Code but to do so would risk findings of non-compliance by the HO and regulatory failure by the Regulator of Social Housing.

12. **NETWORK SERVICES CONTRACT AWARD - SOFTWARE DEFINED WIDE AREA NETWORK (SD WAN) SERVICE**

- 12.1 The Chief Operating Officer submitted a report seeking approval to commission a new Software Defined Wide Area Network (SDWAN) Service from an external provider, as outlined in this report.

This report explains the current WAN service and its importance to the Council and schools. The report goes on to describe the SDWAN network service and its potential benefits to the Council.

- 12.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That Strategy and Resources Policy Committee approves the commissioning of a new Software Defined Wide Area Network (SDWAN) Service from an external Provider for a period of 5 years with an estimated value of £3.6M, as set out in this report.

12.3 **Reasons for Decision**

- 12.3.1 It is recommended that the Council approves the commission of a new SDWAN Network Service. This will:
 - Deliver Savings against current contract.
 - Deliver a more robust, efficient and simpler network service.
 - Delivering a major project at a minimal cost of change with no dual running cost, transformational, project or upfront costs
 - Provide in service performance upgrades to many of the locations with

increases in bandwidth at no additional cost.

- Provides flexibility within the contract to account for estate rationalisation to work with the Accommodation review.

12.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected

12.4.1 Option 1: Do Nothing

This is not an option because the current contract for the services will end on 31st May 2024. As the services are still required, a new contract will be required.

12.4.2 Option 2: Provide SDWAN Network Service in house (in addition to the managed service).

The Council does not have resource or the expertise in house to deliver the services outlined in paragraph 1.2. As such there is a necessity to contract out.

Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED: That the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, if those persons were present, there would be a disclosure to them of exempt information as described in paragraphs 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended.

13. HEART OF THE CITY 2 - MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

13.1 The Director of Finance and Commercial Services submitted a report setting out proposals in respect of management arrangements for the Heart of the City II (HOTCII) Scheme.

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

(a) delegates approval of the financial arrangements as set out at section 1.4 of the report to the Director of Finance and Commercial Services, in consultation with the General Counsel and Chairs of the Strategy and Resources and Finance Committees; and

(b) delegates approval for the property arrangements as set out at sections 1.13 and 1.15 of the report of the Director of Finance and Commercial Services, in consultation with the General Counsel and Chairs of the Strategy and Resources and Finance Committees.

13.3 Reasons for Decision

13.3.1 The decisions to operate a hotel within the HOTCII development and select Radisson as the operator under an IMA have already been made. This report allows the council to operate the hotel in an efficient manner whilst preparing for the eventual sale of the asset at a future date.

13.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected

- 13.4.1 The alternative course of action would be to not enter the arrangements outlined. The main disadvantage to this approach arises when the hotel is sold, which is the current expectation with the HOTCII business case. This would attract increased SDLT costs for a purchaser and is likely to result in a lower sale price.