

CITY OF SHEFFIELD

METROPOLITAN DISTRICT

MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL – 2ND SEPTEMBER 2015

COPIES OF QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS THERETO

Questions

Answers

Questions of Councillor Colin Ross to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Julie Dore)

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| 1. What impact will the recent announcement by the Sheffield Retail Development Group regarding alternative proposals for the redevelopment of the retail quarter have on the progress of the City Council sponsored New Retail Quarter? | The City Council is making progress with its procurement process for seeking a new development partner. The Sheffield Retail Development Group withdrew from the competitive process at the very start and therefore their current announcements have no status. |
| 2. Referring back to February's Council meeting when I was informed that the target date for announcing a partner for the development of the New Retail Quarter is September 2015, is this still the case? | Officers have revised the target date for announcing the preferred development partner to February/ March 2016. |

Question of Councillor Penny Baker to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Julie Dore) - to be answered by Councillor Ben Curran, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources

Can you reassure the Chamber that, as per your election promises, the Council is phasing out zero hours contracts?

Questions of Councillor Andrew Sangar to Councillor Ben Curran (Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources)

In the Fairness Commission Annual Report March 2014 it was stated 'A Living Wage has been implemented by the Council for the staff it directly employs. Work is on-going with contractors. For all new contracts it will seek a commitment from suppliers to move to the Living Wage over time'.

(a) What steps has the Council taken to encourage contractors to pay the Living Wage?

We have a clear policy to move Council contracts to the Living Wage.

Officers work with major contractors and strategic partners to identify plans to help them make savings with a view to the implementation of the Living Wage for their employees.

(b) How many new contracts have been signed overall since March 2014, how many of these have included a requirement to pay the Living Wage?

Unfortunately we have not been able to obtain this information in the timescales I will write to you.

Question of Councillor Penny Baker to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Julie Dore – to be answered by Councillor Ben Curran (Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources)

Can you reassure the Chamber that, as per your election promises, the Council is phasing out zero hours contracts?

Yes

Questions of Councillor Colin Ross to Councillor Jackie Drayton (Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families)

1. How many appeals have been made relating to school places for the academic year beginning September 2015?

As at 26th August 2015, we have received a total of 889 appeals for school places for the academic year 2015/16.
2. How many of these appeals have been successful so far?

686 of these 889 appeals have been dealt with. 84 appeals were successful and 97 were allocated prior to the appeal being heard by the Independent Appeal Panel. 83 appeals were withdrawn by the appellant prior to the appeal being heard. 422 appeals were unsuccessful.
3. How many children are awaiting the outcome of admission appeals?

There are a total of 279 appeals waiting to be heard. These are a mixture of appeals relating to "late" applications for transfer to secondary school and entry to primary school, plus appeals relating to other year groups.

Questions of Councillor Steve Ayris to Councillor Jayne Dunn (Cabinet Member for Housing)

1. In the light of the Chancellor's statement about a 12% reduction in social housing rents by 2020/21, is the Cabinet Member confident that the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) business plan is still viable?

The Chancellor's Summer Budget will have major financial impacts for all social housing providers nationally and Council Housing in Sheffield is no exception.

How the savings are made will be the subject of a full consultation this Autumn and over the coming years.

2. What does the Cabinet Member feel will be the impact of the Government's announcement to fund right to buy for housing associations by selling off the most expensive HRA properties?

The extension of Right to Buy will clearly accelerate the reduction in social housing numbers in the City (both Housing Association and Council) at a time when demand already outstrips supply.

Ministers have not set out how this policy will be paid for, and housing experts have said that the plan is unworkable, unfunded and will lead to fewer affordable homes.

The Government claim that every home will be replaced, but the Government made the same commitment in the last Parliament - and they've failed miserably with building started on only one home for every 10 homes sold.

However the truth is that until the Government sets out its proposals in the Housing Bill this Autumn we don't know specifically how this will impact.

Questions of Councillor Joe Otten to Councillor Terry Fox (Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport)

1. When will the verge protection strategy be agreed?

Our proposed approach to treating damaged areas is undergoing some fine tuning to ensure we offer the right solutions for the city.

2. Do you consider the format of the Tree Forum to have given sufficient time for questions asked by members of the public to be answered?

In the last Highway Tree Advisory Forum the public were given the opportunity to ask questions for an hour which was half of the time dedicated to the meeting.

However, we are revising the format of the meeting to allow the public questions to be answered by Members of the Panel.

This should allow sufficient time for all questions to be comprehensively answered.

3. What difference has the Tree Forum made, so far?

It is difficult to assess the impact the Highway Tree Advisory Forum has made after one meeting. The aim of the Forum is to provide the public with a greater understanding of our approach to managing the city street tree stock.

4. Do you recognise the effect of large mature trees on levels of particulate pollutants and oxides of nitrogen, and do you recognise the City's duty to limit these pollutants?

Yes of course we recognise the role of vegetation including large trees in mitigating the effects of air pollution.

We fully acknowledge that vegetation; including (but not solely trees) intercept airborne particulate matter (PM10), reducing concentrations in air, and thereby improving air quality.

We also recognise that trees provide other benefits to air quality including the uptake of O3, SO2 and NOX.

The Council's overall strategy for addressing air quality not only includes air quality monitoring, but also the planting of 50,000 additional trees creating 17 new woodlands, this year alone, and work to

encourage a phase shift to other more environmentally friendly modes of transport such as bicycle or public transport.

It is a misconception that the Streets Ahead project is removing all mature trees across Sheffield, and we will always strive to retain canopy cover as our first option.

5. How much revenue has been raised from city-centre parking charges in the last 12 months?

City Centre July 2014 to July 2015

Off Street £1,384,605.81

On Street £2,271,917.91

Total £3,656,523.72

6. How much of this has been raised past 6.30pm?

We cannot give a response to this query. The vast majority of the pay and display machines in the City Centre are of an old type which does not provide individual transaction data.

Questions of Councillor Roger Davison to Councillor Mary Lea (Cabinet Member for Health, Care and Independent Living)

1. Regarding the 38 complaints made to the Local Government Ombudsman concerning Adult Social Care in the past year; could you give us a breakdown of the nature of these complaints?

Of the 38 complaints, 12 were not investigated in any way by the Ombudsman. This is typically because the Ombudsman identifies that the complainant has not yet made their concern known to the Council directly, and therefore has not given the Council a chance to investigate. We do not know the identity of these 12 cases, so it is not possible to establish whether or not the complainant went on to ask the Council to investigate.

Of the 26 complaints remaining, 10 were closed after initial enquiries because the Ombudsman could not find grounds for further investigation.

Of the 16 complaints that went on to full Ombudsman investigation, 4 were not upheld (the Ombudsman could not find fault with the Council), 4 are yet to be decided upon, and 8 were upheld.

The key themes from the 8 complaints that were found by the Ombudsman to involve fault from the Council is as follows:

- Five of the complaints demonstrated failings in relation to a timely response to a request from a customer or carers for help or advice.
- Three of the complaints demonstrated failings in relation to providing clear and transparent information about the basis for a social work decision, most often in relation to a reduction in care.
- Three of the complaints demonstrated failings in relation to properly weighing up the risks to the safety of somebody with social care needs.
- Two of the complaints demonstrated failings in

relation to giving customers short “respite” breaks in residential care homes that did not meet their needs.

2. If there are any reoccurring themes in these complaints, what steps are the Council taking to prevent these being issues in the future?

Although 8 upheld Ombudsman investigations represents a tiny proportion of the total number of people provided with social care support by Sheffield City Council, it can be seen that some complaints have common themes. Regardless of the low numbers, it would be wrong to be complacent about service quality especially in the context of increasing demand and continued austerity.

Each and every upheld ombudsman complaint automatically results in an improvement plan designed to resolve the issues for the complainant and also to ensure that lessons are learned that will improve outcomes for future customers.

In addition, the Council is carrying out wider improvement work to adult social care that will address the themes raised by the Ombudsman:

- Improvement of access to social care
- Improvement of information and advice given to Sheffield citizens about social care support
- Review of safeguarding procedures and practice
- Improved co-ordination between social work and commissioning staff in relation to care home facilities and quality.