

## CITY OF SHEFFIELD

### METROPOLITAN DISTRICT

#### MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL – 8<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2016

#### COPIES OF QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS THERETO

##### Questions

##### Answers

#### Questions of Councillor Shaffaq Mohammed to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Julie Dore)

1. Will the leader make a statement on her decision to create another cabinet post for her colleagues, and in the process paying a councillor an additional £9,083.88 in special responsibility allowances (SRAs)?

The Liberal Democrat Group led by yourself voted in favour of this at the AGM last month.

This Administration has saved a significant amount from the Councillor's allowances budget since we came into office and we have the same number of Cabinet Members as the Cabinet of which you were a member.
2. Will you please tell the council where this extra money for the SRA has come from given that it was not in the revenue budget approved by this Council?

Please see the answer above, overall we are making savings to Members allowances budgets including in 16/17.
3. What representations has the Leader of the Council made to
  - (a) MP for Stocksbridge and Penistone
  - (b) Leader of Barnsley Council
  - (c) Leader of Rotherham Council
  - (d) Mayor of Doncaster- to push the case for a Sheffield City Centre HS2 station.

I have had a consistent position on this issue throughout that the station should be located in the City Centre. This is a fundamental issue for our economy and the evidence overwhelmingly suggests that the economic case is far stronger in the City Centre, counting to thousands of extra jobs and billions more in Gross Value Added than a Meadowhall station. Analysis of commuter patterns also illustrate that a City Centre option creates more jobs to be accessed by people in every part of the City region than the Meadowhall station.

I have always stood up for Sheffield and pushed this view on many occasions to each of the stakeholders you have listed in recent years. However, I feel it is important to point out that this has been a longstanding campaign and Meadowhall was first announced as the Government's preferred option by then Deputy Prime Minister and Sheffield Hallam MP Nick Clegg in January 2013.

Ultimately this is a decision that will be taken by the Government and HS2 Limited, therefore it is unbelievable that the MP for Sheffield Hallam chose to sit on his hands and do nothing to push the case for a City Centre station when he was Deputy Prime Minister and you didn't put pressure on him to change the Government's view. You consistently put the interests of the MP for Sheffield Hallam above the interests of Sheffield.

We met with the MP for Sheffield Hallam about this issue when he was Deputy Prime Minister but ultimately he did nothing to help.

I am increasingly concerned about your attempts to use this as a party political issue due to the difference in views between South Yorkshire Councils. Doing this will do nothing to help the campaign to locate the station in the City Centre. I have not made this issue party political despite the obvious failings of the MP for Sheffield Hallam who has let Sheffield down badly. It is outrageous that whilst he was Deputy Prime Minister the MP for Sheffield Hallam launched the South Yorkshire station at Meadowhall instead of in the City Centre.

Unlike myself, who has always put the interests of Sheffield first regardless of the politics, when the Deputy Prime Minister launched HS2 at Meadowhall and supported it over the City Centre, your Group under your leadership went distinctly quiet on the issue and therefore failed to exert any influence to change his mind when it could have influenced Government policy, this included your Group voting against a number of motions calling for Government to change to a city centre station.

The link to Nick Clegg launching HS2 at Meadowhall as Deputy Prime Minister can be found at this link, where he also dismisses and criticises the city centre HS2 option:

<http://www.itv.com/news/calendar/update/2013-01-28/nick-clegg-hs2-will-heal-north-south-divide/>

Please also see an excerpt from an article from the BBC website, 28 January 2013 with the

following quote from Nick Clegg

"The City Centre option is not a cost-free one.

"It would be a lot more expensive and also the train link would be slower, which slightly defeats the purpose of the whole exercise."

Mr Clegg said a route in central Sheffield would have cut through a 4,000 home community housing development, the state-of-the-art Advanced Manufacturing Park in Rotherham and a stretch of ancient woodland.

He said: "If you look at those balance of effects of one location versus another, most fair-minded people would conclude, as the Department for Transport has, that this is a better location."

One can only conclude that whilst he was Deputy Prime Minister and he actually had power and the opportunity to deliver a City Centre station he had no interest in doing something about it which would have benefited Sheffield. Now the Liberal Democrats, coming to the party so late in the day, when Nick Clegg is a back bench opposition MP is cynical politics at its worst and represents much of why the Liberal Democrats and Nick Clegg in particular are not trusted.

In addition the Liberal Democrats on Ecclesfield Parish Council are continuing to push for a Meadowhall station now putting motions to recent Council meetings, so I hope you will encourage them to change their view.

4. For each of the above, I would like to know –

(1) How many meetings, and if any, what were the outcomes of those meetings?

(2) How many instances of correspondence, and if any, what were the outcomes?

As I have stated above I have been in consistent dialogue with all the parties mentioned about our position on this issue for a number of years and have raised it at numerous meetings, pushing the case for a City Centre location. This has been a longstanding issue that we have been working on for a long time.

5. Have you had an official meeting with either the Chief Executive or Chairperson of HS2 Ltd to push the case for a City Centre Station for HS2, and if so, what were the outcomes of that meeting?

I have held many meetings with both the Chief Executive and Chairperson of HS2, in addition to meetings and conversations with many other Ministers, civil servants and officials from Transport for the North, pushing the case for a City Centre station. We are still working with them in partnership with many other key stakeholders in the City.

Questions of Councillor Paul Scriven to Councillor Leigh Bramall (Cabinet Member for Business and Economy)

1. Does the Council endorse the recommendations in the Tech North Digital Powerhouse report of May 2016?

The Tech North is the latest in a line of reports which show how Sheffield has a strong and growing digital and tech sector. Its recommendations are broad and far reaching but its general direction of travel and focus on the distinctiveness of Northern Cities like Sheffield is to be welcomed.

2. If so, what actions will the Council take to support the implementation of the recommendations that require public sector bodies to act?

Sheffield is already well on with many of the recommendations that relate to public sector bodies; we have not needed to wait and react to this report. For example;

- SMART Cities; we ran the successful “SMART Lab” initiative with Amey to test and nurture new commercial applications based on new technology
- We are the Accountable Body for the “Maker Hub” project, working with a newly formed not for profit Trust from the Tech Sector to develop more co working space and business accelerator programmes in the city
- We are working with the new Sheffield City Region Growth Hub to make sure publicly funded business support is tailored to the needs of the tech Sector, and
- Digitisation of public services

Questions of Councillor Martin Smith to Councillor Leigh Bramall (Cabinet Member for Business and Economy)

1. With regards to the proposed new leisure hall at Meadowhall:

(a) will it have a material impact on the plans, timetable or viability of the new retail quarter?

This will be assessed as part of the planning application and the work to enable this to be assessed has not yet been undertaken.

- (b) has the developer sought pre-application advice from the Council?
- Yes, British Land have recently engaged in pre-application discussions with the Planning Service.
2. What actions have you taken to ensure that HSBC remains a major employer in Sheffield?
- HSBC have committed to Sheffield as a key location, outlining their plans to move to a new office building in the Retail Quarter by 2019.
- We have been working closely with HSBC to shape its plans and cement its longstanding relationship with Sheffield – now it has chosen to maintain a significant part of its global business here. We now need to work with HSBC to finalise their requirements and to accelerate this phase of the Retail Quarter.
3. What support is the Council offering to workers who are being made redundant at HSBC, Polestar and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills?
- Officers from Creative Sheffield have met with senior management or Trade Unions for each of those organisations. Alongside the mainstream JobCentre Plus ‘Rapid Response Team’, we are helping to provide careers advice, CV and skills training, job matching services and linking local employers who are looking to recruit to staff affected through bulletin boards or jobs fayres.
4. When will comments from the consultation on the City Wide Options for Growth 2034 be made available to the public?
- To be answered by Councillor Mazher Iqbal.
5. With regards to the new register of brownfield sites:-
- (a) can you please tell me when the Brownfield Register will be set up?
- (b) will its contents be made available to the public?
- To be answered by Councillor Mazher Iqbal.

Question of Councillor Penny Baker to Councillor Ben Curran (Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources)

For each year 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 please state -

- |     |  |  |
|-----|--|--|
| (a) | How many people worked for the Council on zero hour contracts?   | 0  |
| (b) | How many people who provide services to the Council through an outsourced contractor were employed on zero hour contracts? | We do not have access to this information. |

Questions of Councillor Richard Shaw to Councillor Ben Curran (Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources)

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|----|--|---|
| 1. | Can you confirm whether the Land Registry entry for Gulley's Wood Meadow has been updated to confirm the Council's ownership since I last raised this at the Council meeting in April? | I have not had this information yet, I will ensure you receive a written response as soon as possible |
| 2. | If the Land Registry has not been updated, when is this expected to be completed by?   | See above   |

Questions of Councillor Richard Shaw to Councillor Jayne Dunn (Cabinet Member for Housing)

1. Please can the Cabinet Member list the following for each year 2013, 2014 and 2015:-

(a) the number of houses that have been "long term vacant" for 6 months or more?

The number of properties in the city empty for 6 months or more was:

2009	3229
2010	3345
2011	3325
2012	2719
2013	2409
2014	2186
2015	2095

(b) where Sheffield was placed nationally in local authorities for the number of long term vacant properties vacant for 6 months or more?

Numbers are only available across all tenures at Local Authority level, and they are not placed against the overall stock, so comparisons are not meaningful.

However, there has been a reduction in long term empty properties in the last 3 years (between October 2013 and October 2015 ) across all Metropolitan District Councils of 4.3%, whilst Sheffield has reduced its number by 13% (from 2409 in October 13 to 2095 in October 15).

(c) under the Council's powers, how many empty homes have been "seized" by the Council and brought back into use?

The Council does not have the power to 'seize' empty private homes and unfortunately many of the powers that the Council does have to bring empty homes back into use were watered down by the previous Coalition Government.

2. Are you aware that the gas cooker at the Gresley Road Tenants Hall in Lowedges was replaced by the Council with a domestic electric appliance of lesser power and capacity, despite the former cooker being in good working order?

The situation is that the original gas cooker was replaced some time ago by an electric one after it was found that it didn't meet gas safety standards.

Transport and Facilities Management have checked the new cooker as a result of Councillor Shaw's original enquiry. They have confirmed that there are no faults with it or with the power supply. It's a 'range' style oven, therefore a larger capacity than a



standard domestic oven and is identical to those used in other community centres for the same purpose.

3. Do you regret that, as a result of the above, attendance figures at the weekly Lunch Club (which has been running for more than 50 years) have fallen by more than two-thirds and that its future is now in doubt?

We are, of course, very concerned about the comments Councillor Shaw has made about the viability of the luncheon club which is clearly an important service for residents in the area and makes a valuable contribution to the Council's strategic vision/aims to keep residents 'independent, safe and well'. So, Council Housing Service Managers are already planning to contact the organisers in case they would find it helpful to discuss this with us directly. There may be further assistance, advice or support we can offer, either directly or in partnership with others.

4. Will you ensure that the cooker is replaced with one of sufficient capacity and power within the month?

There are no plans, as things stand at the moment, to provide any alternative or additional cooking facilities. However, as previously stated, we will review the situation again directly with the organisers of the luncheon club. If the current facilities are detrimental to the successful running of the luncheon club, I am confident we can find a mutually agreeable solution.

Questions of Councillor Ian Auckland to Councillor Mazher Iqbal (Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Transport)

I have received several comments from local residents who were unable to access planning documents via the Council website due to a 'systems update'.

1. What caused this problem?

The planning application system software underwent a full upgrade. This included the online Public Access software, the Uniform/IDOX applications database software, and mobile phone and tablet compatibility. In addition, the software was being installed on new servers.

A window of change was planned for the upgrade between 9<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> May, where existing applications would be available on the old version, but new applications would go online post upgrade.

During the upgrade of the online Public Access system unexpected system issues were identified during the testing of the solution prior to go-live of the new software.

The Council decided not to make the new system available online until a fix/work around had been applied to the system by the third party supplier (IDOX/Uniform)

The fixes were completed by the third party and applied on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> May. The system was successfully retested on Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> May and the new system went live on that day within the planned window

2. How long was public access unavailable?

During the upgrade the old Public Access system was available and showed all planning applications processed before the 9<sup>th</sup> May – with full capability to view applications. Hence at no time was the Public Access system unavailable.

Any applications (including new applications) processed after the 9<sup>th</sup>

May were not available to view online until the 31<sup>st</sup> May. A communication to this effect was placed on the Council website. Public comments could and were still made by an alternative route via e-mail to a Planning Applications mailbox rather than directly on-line, details of which were provided on-line.

3. What penalties, if any, will be applied by the Council to Capita for not completing this work on time?
4. What penalties, if any, will be applied by the Council to Capita for causing online planning applications to go offline, even though they were specifically asked that planning apps must remain accessible at all times?

Capita did complete this work on time.

The old system was available during the upgrade process and as such existing applications were available to view on-line.

It was always known by the Council that there would be a period during the upgrade where only the old system would be accessible.

The Council is re-running the statutory planning notification processes for any applications adversely affected by this outage. As a result, the public will still have the full 21 day period to view and comment on all planning applications which have been received during the change window. Most planning applications have to be determined within eight weeks, so the Planning Service is still confident that it will be able to determine the majority of applications in time and therefore meeting its performance targets.

Questions of Councillor Martin Smith to Councillor Mazher Iqbal (Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Transport)

1. When will comments from the consultation on the City Wide Options for Growth 2034 be made available to the public?
2. With regards to the new register of brownfield sites;
  - (a) can you please tell me when the Brownfield Register will be set

We will publish them in due course.

The Housing and Planning Act enables the Secretary of State to

up?

make regulations requiring a Local Planning Authority in England to compile and maintain a register of particular kinds of land either wholly or partly within that Authority's area. Sheffield will be required to produce a statutory register in line with those regulations when they have been formally and officially set out.

(b) will its contents be made available to the public?

See above

Questions of Councillor Roger Davison to Councillor Mary Lea (Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Parks)

1. I have received a letter from the City of Sheffield Hatters Women's Basketball Club stating that they spoke with a councillor who had promised a meeting to discuss ways in which Sheffield City Council could help and support the Sheffield Hatters but nothing has come of this. Would the Cabinet Member agree to meet with representatives of the Sheffield Hatters to discuss ways in which Sheffield City Council could support the Hatters in the good work they do for the community?

I am not aware of any approach by the Hatters but would be more than happy to meet with their representative.

2. Will Sheffield be making any effort to be considered for UK City of Culture 2021?

We are always looking for ways to promote Sheffield and are always considering potential ways of doing this, such as this Administration's record of bringing Tour de France to Sheffield, keeping World Snooker in the City, hosting the British University and College Sport Finals and enhancing numerous key events in the City such as Off the Shelf, Tramlines and DocFest. We will continue to consider all opportunities to promote the City in the future.

Questions of Councillor Joe Otten to Councillor Bryan Lodge (Cabinet Member for Environment)

1. What criteria was used to select the areas to be part of the living highways?

The City was divided into four to make sure that the whole of Sheffield is represented in the trial. Roads which have more than 100m of grass verges were randomly selected in each of the four areas of the city. This was to make sure there was enough verge to measure the impact on wildlife of cutting verges less frequently and to avoid bias.

2. What areas have been chosen and what %age of grass verges in Sheffield is the experimental area?

- Blackbrook Avenue
- Cavendish Avenue
- Lyndhurst Road
- Greystones Grange Road
- Greystones Hall Road
- Whirlowdale Road
- Folds Crescent
- Bochum Parkway
- Ridgeway Road
- Thornbridge Crescent
- Bowden Wood Crescent
- Ravenscroft Drive
- Moss Way
- Spring Lane
- Elm Lane
- Lindsay Avenue
- Ecclesfield Road
- Sheffield Parkway
- Bawtry Road
- Wincobank Lane
- Southey Hill
- Middlewood Road North
- Crowder Avenue
- Colley Avenue
- Herries Road

3. What is the experimental protocol by which the success or failure of the experiment will be judged? On what timescale?

We are looking at the impact of the change e.g. do the number and abundance of plant/insect species significantly increase/decrease when verges are mown less. During the experiment, we are doing invertebrate and botanical surveys as well as asking local residents their opinions using questionnaires. Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust are going to have a volunteer doing bird surveys.

As for the timescale, it depends on how quickly we are able to process the insect samples, but it will be next year before we have any results.

4. What is the new frequency of the grass verge cutting in the areas of the living streets pilot and how does that differ from the existing frequency of grass cutting?

The grass verges on the selected roads will be mown, we are just looking at the impacts of reducing how often the grass verge is mown. One side of the road will be mown as usual (every 3-4 weeks) and the other side of the road will be mown every 6-8 weeks. This will allow us to directly compare the impact on wildlife.

5. What arrangements have been made if the public complain about the length of the grass and find it not acceptable in their area?

The Living Highways trial is designed to see what effect, if any, the frequency of grass cutting has on the environment. The trial will run during the Summer and we expect the results will be known next year. We would hope that the public would support us in this trial and help us make Sheffield an even greener city. If residents do want to provide us with their feedback then this can be given via [www.sheffield.gov.uk/contactus](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/contactus)

6. Will any cost savings be made from less frequency of grass cutting? If so, what is the estimated saving for (a) the experiment period and b) if this were to be extended to the whole City.

The purpose of the trial is to assess the environmental impact, it is not an exercise to generate cost savings.

7. When will the verge protection strategy be agreed?

After a further review of the decision-making process around how to treat damaged verges, it has been decided that producing a simple flowchart showing that process is not practical. That is because there are too many site variables to cover (e.g. road width, availability of off-street parking, extent of damage, frequency of damage, location of underground services, width of verge, location of trees or street lights, etc.). Individual decisions will continue to be made as they have successfully for over three years of Streets Ahead based on the situation at each location. The options available remain as soil and seed, harden the verge through the use of

road planings and protection through installing bollards. Each option has advantages and disadvantages. No verges will be resurfaced and any requests for treatment to damaged verges can be made through the usual customer contact channels.

8. What recommendations have been made so far by the Tree Panel and when will these be published?

We have currently received 12 pieces of advice on 12 trees that were referred to the Panel and we are in the process of planning further exploratory work to see if the advice given is practicable and affordable. Before this exploratory work is undertaken we will inform the public and once the work has taken place we will then make our final decision on these trees which will be published via [www.sheffield.gov.uk/streetsahead](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/streetsahead)

9. What responses has the administration made to Tree Panel recommendations and when will these be published?

See above answer.

10. What is the expected schedule of future recommendations by the Tree Panel, and responses from the Administration?

This process is managed by the Independent Tree Panel.

11. Do you recognise that it is possible for a mature large canopy tree on the highway to be of greater value and benefit to local people for its contribution to the natural environment and to air quality, than the rebuilding of a couple of metres of footway?

Our policy is always to retain trees wherever possible. We recognise the value trees have to streets although accept that the value cannot be realised financially. Additions to the highway involve the Council finding real available funding sources which is difficult in this period of budget constraints.

12. Do you accept that in order to satisfy the council's Code of Corporate Governance requirement "Taking informed decisions ..." and the Members Code of Conduct requirement for objectivity ("Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.") highway tree removal decisions need

The Council has many legal duties and responsibilities that influence decision making. A tree strategy is not a legal requirement but having a safe highway is. In the recent judgement from the High Court the Judge made that position very clear.



to be informed by a tree strategy that takes into account the quality of life and ecosystem benefits of mature highway trees?

Questions of Councillor Richard Shaw to Councillor Jack Scott (Cabinet Member for Community Services and Libraries)

1. How much money has the council spent on newspaper advertising for community events, groups or associations in each of the financial years 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17?

As far as our records indicate, the Council has not spent any money on any newspaper advertising related to community groups or events in any of the financial years requested.
2. Does the Council charge community events, groups or associations for providing press advertising?

No, as the Council does not provide press advertising – this is a matter for newspapers.
3. How does the Council choose which groups are included in press advertising?

The Council does not run newspapers.

We have no control over which adverts media outlets choose to include.