

Climate Change, Economy and Development Transitional Committee

Meeting held 7 October 2021

**PRESENT:** Councillors Mark Jones (Chair), Barbara Masters (Deputy Chair), Neale Gibson, Tim Huggan, Dianne Hurst, Douglas Johnson, Chris Rosling-Josephs, Martin Smith and Paul Turpin

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**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

1.1 An apology for absence was received from Councillor Abtisam Mohamed.

**2. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

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

**3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

**4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

4.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 7th July 2021 were approved as a correct record.

**5. INTRODUCTION TO TRANSITIONAL COMMITTEES**

5.1 The Committee received a report of the Policy and Improvement Officer (Alice Nicholson) on an introduction to Transitional Committees attaching, as an appendix, a paper setting out what the Committees were, how they could operate and their role and interaction with the public, Co-operative Executive, Local Area Committees and Scrutiny Committees.

5.2 The report indicated that the four Transitional Committees had been established by Full Council on 19th May 2021, on a politically proportionate basis, and included representation from Executive Members, to help the Council work within a system where all parties' views were taken into consideration when making decisions or setting policy, as the Council moved towards implementing a Committee system in May 2022.

5.3 **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:-

(a) notes the contents of the report now submitted; and

(b) requests that any papers/reports relating to the work of the Committee be

circulated to Members as early as possible to ensure they were fully briefed, and able to make informed comments at meetings.

## **6. OUR FUTURE APPROACH TO PRIORITY BUDGETING**

- 6.1 Councillor Cate MacDonald (Executive Member for Finance and Resources), as an introduction, stated that the Council wished to work closely with the four Transitional Committees in connection with the budget-setting process, specifically seeking views from Members on the priorities for their respective Committees, both in terms of growth and savings.
- 6.2 Also in attendance for this item were Eugene Walker (Executive Director, Resources) and Laurie Brennan (Head of Policy and Partnerships).
- 6.3 Eugene Walker reported on the current budget position, indicating that the Council was facing an overspend of £40m, which represented a major challenge for the city. He referred to the budget pressures faced by the Council during the Covid-19 pandemic, and the assistance provided by the Government, which had enabled the Council to achieve a balanced budget in 2020/21. Mr Walker stated that main pressures facing the Council focussed on children's and adult social care, and that this represented a priority in terms of budget allocation.
- 6.4 Laurie Brennan reported on the Council's one-year plan, and referred to the importance of opening dialogue on the budget with the Transitional Committees in order to find out what their priorities were.
- 6.5 Members of the Committee raised questions, and the following responses were provided:-
- The Council had to take a much more strategic approach in terms of the budget-setting process, with the budget to be informed by policy priorities. Members of the four Transitional Committees would be asked for their views in terms of their respective priorities, and such views would help to inform the Co-operative Executive's decision on the Council's budget priorities for 2021/22. The work involved in terms of forwarding the Council's priorities to the Co-operative Executive would represent a significant task, and the consultation with the Transitional Committees provided an opportunity to broaden out that approach. The Council needed to look at how it could change things within its existing resources, how it could prioritise and deprioritise change activity to achieve its aims and look at specific projects which could attract external funding.
  - There would be officer resource to support the Transitional Committees and, as well as looking at priorities in terms of next year's budget, the Council was committed to the actions set out in the one-year plan, including the production of a Corporate Plan.
  - Loss of income for the Council had been a major issue during the pandemic, as it had been for all local authorities. The Council would, as always, look at new potential sources of income, although this would be difficult given the existing

legacy created by the pandemic. Recovery had now recommenced, but in a controlled manner, due to the fragility of individuals' and businesses' income.

- The drafting of the budget would involve the usual officer input and overview from Executive Members in terms of their respective portfolio areas. The new element of the process would involve the Transitional Committees, although it was not envisaged that the Committees would have a detailed input this year. The views of each of the Transitional Committees would be sought, specifically in terms of their priorities, and considered as part of the budget-setting process.
- The £40 million overspend was not growing, and the Council was looking at ways of mitigating such amount, but there was always the possibility of an increase, particularly with regard to adult and children's social care. There were concerns that if the overspend was carried over to 2022/23, this could create further pressures. The budget would continue to be monitored by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee
- The Council worked closely with other core cities, as well as with the Special Interest Group of Municipal Authorities (SIGOMA) and the Local Government Association (LGA) in connection with lobbying the Government for additional funding.
- The Council worked very closely with the Chamber of Commerce, and the Leader of the Council (Councillor Terry Fox) had met with the Chamber on a number of occasions in connection with support for businesses in the city. Such discussions would form part of the Council's formal budget-setting process. The Council's City Growth Team also undertook a lot of work in this regard. The Council also had wider discussions with the business community to look at how the city could tackle specific issues, such as poverty and climate change.
- The Council was always looking at spend to save initiatives, in partnership with other groups and organisations, including the NHS. There were specific discussions ongoing with regard to Children's Services where spending on preventative measures could often result in savings in the future, although these efforts had been hampered by the pandemic.

6.7 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the information now reported, together with the responses to the questions raised;
- (b) thanks Councillor Cate McDonald, Eugene Walker and Laurie Brennan for attending the meeting, and responding to the questions raised; and
- (c) requests that a briefing paper be circulated to members of the Committee on the impact on the Council of the Covid-19 pandemic resulting from the shortfall in Government funding, particularly with regard to social care.

## **7. CENTRAL AREA STRATEGY**

7.1 The Committee received an update from Nalin Seneviratne (Director, City Centre Development) on the Central Area Strategy.

7.2 Also in attendance for this item was Councillor Abdul Khayum (Executive Advisor for City Futures, Development, Culture and Regeneration).

7.3 Members of the Committee raised questions, and the following responses were provided:-

- Whilst the city was currently suffering from a lack of office workers in the city centre, as a result of staff not returning to work after lockdown, there was still a demand from businesses for quality office space due to the good transport links and wider offer the city centre provided for their staff.
- Improving access to the city centre by public transport was a key aim for the Council, particularly with regard to sustainability and the green agenda.
- The Council was working on options with regard to the repurposing of the John Lewis building, which would form part of the engagement through the City Centre Plan. The future of the Debenhams building was not in the Council's control, but officers were currently in discussion with the lease owners, although there were no plans as regards its future at the present time.
- It was accepted that the timescale in terms of the completion of the City Centre Plan would include a three-week consultation, with the aim of delivering this in late November 2021, subject to approvals. However, it was recognised that this was challenging, and that the consultation may be delivered in early 2022 to enable overall delivery in line with the One Year Plan.
- The Council had a Transport Strategy, part of which included the Transforming Cities Fund and Connecting Sheffield Strategy. The City Centre Plan would make reference to the importance of connectivity and accessibility, and draw in the relevant elements of the Connecting Sheffield Strategy, as well as making reference to the wider Transport Strategy. The Head of Strategic Transport and Infrastructure (Tom Finnegan-Smith) was responsible for the Strategic Transport Plan for the city centre.
- The issues of accessibility, both into and out of, the city centre, needed to be addressed, and in terms of trying to encourage more people to live in the city centre, the various housing markets and demand from different demographic groups, and what incentivised them to live in the city centre, would be addressed in the Plan. Increased density of living in the city centre represented one of the most sustainable ways of any city to operate
- The Council was constantly trying to attract and support smaller, independent businesses in the city centre, as highlighted by the Heart of the City project. One specific project was Leah's Yard, where its success would be assessed not just through footfall figures, but also through social impact measures. A

further such scheme was the Cambridge Street Collective.

- Plans for high-rise buildings in the city have not materialised, with planning permission having recently been granted for a high-rise development on the site of the former Primark store in Castlegate, but such development had not progressed.
- It was accepted there was a need to activate public spaces in the city centre with temporary markets and other events on Fargate, using Future High Streets funding, and which would involve the provision of quality infrastructure in order to help activate this area.
- There was a need to create neighbourhoods within the city centre, with suitable, quality amenities, including green and open spaces.
- Arrangements would be made for a draft City Centre Plan to be circulated to Members of the Committee to enable them to have something to refer to when providing input to the Plan.
- There needs to be something in the City Centre Plan which would enable the progress in economic activity in the city centre to be measured, as opposed to simply using footfall figures. An example of such work had been undertaken on the Heart of the City project. The targets set out in the economic plan for that project were measured with some 4400 jobs secured to date out of a planned 7000 and economic activity delivered to date estimated at £0.97b out of a planned £3.15b to 2030.
- The City Centre Plan was all about addressing short, medium and long-term issues in the city centre. The short- term issues related to all the key sites, from Castlegate down to Moorfoot. Underpinning these was the key issue with regard to connectivity and accessibility within, and to and from, the city centre. The City Centre Development Team was fully engaged with the Council's Transport Team, and the current Transport Strategy and Connecting Sheffield Strategy were key to this work.
- The query as to whether any special planning policies could be implemented to protect existing come up and encourage new, independent businesses in the city centre, would be referred to the Head of Planning.
- The City Centre Plan covered everywhere within the Ring Road, as well as the Park Hill, Kelham Island and St Mary's Church areas. Officers would welcome the opportunity of looking at water transport as part of the plan.

7.4 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the information now reported on the updates on the Central Area Strategy;
- (b) thanks Councillor Abdul Khayum and Nalin Seneviratne for attending the meeting and responding to the questions raised; and

- (c) requests that the Director, City Centre Development, submits a report on the next stage of the Central Area Strategy to a future meeting of the Committee for comment.

## **8. PATHWAY TO NET ZERO - UPDATE ON THE 10-POINT PLAN**

8.1 The Committee received a presentation from Councillor Douglas Johnson (Executive Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport) on the Council's 10-point plan for climate action. Councillor Johnson referred to the story so far, what needed to change, the approach to the Plan, the six principles within the Plan, the Council's priorities for climate action and the timescales relating to the Plan.

8.2 Also in attendance for this item were Victoria Penman (Economic Policy Officer), Tom Finnegan-Smith (Head of Strategic Transport, Sustainability and Infrastructure) and Mark Whitworth (Sustainability and Climate Change Service Manager).

8.3 Members of the Committee raised questions, and the following responses were provided:-

- The areas shown on the slide 'What needs to change' represented those areas for which the Council had direct responsibility for, but within the wider principles, particularly with regards to collaboration, a major part of the Plan was how the Council worked and engaged with communities and businesses across the city.
- The Council needed to give serious consideration so the installation of solar panels in all newly built Council houses, particularly as such works represented only a modest increase in construction costs. This, however, was not happening at the present time. Similar consideration also needed to be given to the installation of ground or air source heat pumps in new buildings. Officers were currently talking to colleagues who in the Housing Service, who were looking at pilots regarding alternative technologies, such as heat pumps, and it was hoped that there would be some details surrounding this in the next version of the Plan, in November 2021. It was accepted that there was a need to accelerate this work, both within the Council and across the city as a whole.
- The Council needed to give consideration to its priorities with regard to land use, specifically regarding flood management. Consideration should be given to implementing a scheme, such as the one in Hebden Bridge, which represented an exemplar in terms of flood management. With regard to the use of land for flood water retention, the Council was currently considering a range of options, with a planned storage being one such option within the schemes being progressed as part of the flood management programme. Specific details would be drafted with regard to each of the proposed schemes, and engagement would be held on the specifics of each scheme.
- It was accepted that the Council should not be telling people what they should

be eating. The Plan was more about trying to influence or enable them in this regard, such as asking people to think about where the food they chose to eat had come from and encouraging them to grow their own food.

- It was accepted that it was more likely to be those people from the poorest communities who would struggle with the requirements in terms of achieving the net zero carbon targets. It was important to ensure that everyone had the same options and opportunities in terms of both keeping their homes warm and being able to take part in active travel. Every effort would be made to ensure that it was a just transition in order to make sure all Sheffield residents were fully engaged in the process, and that no one was disadvantaged by any of the proposed changes. The Council needed to fully understand all the equality implications of its various plans, strategies and projects it aimed to deliver as part of the Plan, and there were plans to undertake qualitative impact assessments where relevant. The work would also aim to address some of the inequalities faced by some people.
- Most of the engagement and consultation would be held at such time the delivery plans were being developed. There had been a considerable level of work leading up to the draft Plan, including discussions and events held with a number of relevant groups and organisations and key stakeholders, including the Climate Summit in March 2021, where views of attendees had been sought.
- Officers were in discussion with colleagues in the Planning Service with regard to bringing forward supplementary planning guidance, which related to some of the commitments set out in the Plan over the next 12 months.

8.4 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the information reported as part of the presentation, the additional information now reported and the responses to the questions raised;
- (b) thanks Councillor Douglas Johnson, Tom Finnegan- Smith, Mark Whitworth and Victoria Penman for attending the meeting and responding to the questions raised; and
- (c) requests that the revised 10-Point Plan, incorporating the amendments and suggestions made at this meeting, be submitted to the next meeting to be held on 10th November 2021, for further comment, prior to its submission to the Co- operative Executive.

**9. WAYS OF WORKING AND WORK PLAN**

- 9.1 The Committee received a report of the Policy and Improvement Officer (Alice Nicholson) on proposed ways of working for the Committee, and containing a draft Work Plan for the Committee for 2021/22.
- 9.2 The Chair made reference to the comments and suggestions made at this meeting as to how the Committee should work, and to the proposed topics for consideration,

as set out in the report, and which included Economic Recovery after the Covid-19 Pandemic, Ethical Procurement Strategy and the Local Plan.

9.3 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the contents of the report now submitted, together with the comments now made; and
- (b) requests that:
  - (i) arrangements be made for papers relating to items on future agendas be circulated to members at the earliest possible opportunity;
  - (ii) the Chair, in consultation with the Deputy Chair (Councillor Barbara Masters) report back on how the first meeting of the Committee had proceeded, and to report on any proposals in terms of the operation of future meetings, based on the comments and suggestions now made; and
  - (iii) the Policy and Improvement Officer, in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Committee, makes arrangements for representatives of relevant key stakeholders to either attend future meetings or be kept up to date on the work of the Committee, in connection with those issues relevant to them.

**10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

- 10.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Thursday, 10<sup>th</sup> November 2021, at 10.00 am, in the Town Hall.