

CITY OF SHEFFIELD

METROPOLITAN DISTRICT

MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL – 1ST JUNE, 2022

COPIES OF QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS THERETO

Question of Councillor Shaffaq Mohammed to the Leader of the Council and Chair of the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee (Councillor Terry Fox)

- Q. What plans are in place to improve response times for the Council Tax collection service so that enquires and changes of status are dealt with promptly avoiding unnecessary losses of revenue and cases of hardship?
- A. The Council continues to seek ways in which it can improve its processes and the performance it gives to our customers. To this end a full review of the Council Tax Service is currently underway. Alongside this, the Council's Customer Service team is embarking on a programme of recruitment in order to increase the capacity of the Council Tax Call Centre to deal with customer calls.

Question of Councillor Barbara Masters to the Leader of the Council and Chair of the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee (Councillor Terry Fox)

- Q. A Notice of Motion agreed at the October Full Council meeting included these resolutions to look at the potential of heat recovery as a power source for Sheffield. At the meeting of the City Council – 2nd February, 2022 I asked you if you would look into this as a matter of urgency, not only to help address the climate emergency but also to address the escalating fuel crisis which will impact most heavily on our most vulnerable residents. You stated that this was already being considered in a project coordinated through SYMCA and that you had asked officers to provide you with a full briefing on the current status of the project. Can we have an update us on the status of the project?
- A. Heat recovery is currently being explored through two approaches that Council Officers are involved in, which I will outline:
- Earlier in the year, the Council was selected to be a pilot in the Government's Heat Network Zoning Pilot programme. We are one of 28

cities and towns who are helping to test an approach to develop heat network zones, which are areas within which heat networks are expected to offer the lowest cost to decarbonise buildings within the zone. As part of this work, Consultants who have been appointed by Government are looking at waste heat from manufacturing and industrial processes that could potentially feed into any new or existing heat networks.

As part of this pilot programme, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) have also contracted with the Coal Authority to undertake feasibility within the relevant pilot towns and cities, including Sheffield, to understand the opportunities for mine water heat projects. The findings from this should be known later this year.

Sheffield City Council is also linking in with wider conversations with South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) and Local authorities in South Yorkshire on mine water heat potential.

This work being undertaken to understand the potential for heat recovery from industrial and manufacturing sources as well as old mine workings, could help to provide opportunities to reduce both carbon emissions as well the cost of energy for customers. However, this is unlikely to help with the immediate energy price crisis.

Families across the city are facing a cost-of-living crisis and are struggling with rising prices including the cost of heating their homes. We anticipate that this will mean many families will face fuel poverty and therefore we are leading an urgent, whole city approach. The cost-of-living crisis is a serious challenge for our communities that needs national and local action and while we can't change energy prices or stop the rising cost of food, we can work together as a whole city to support those who need it most. We are putting in place incident response arrangements to help the city respond and prepare for autumn and winter period. This builds on the £8.3m we spend on financial support to those in greatest need in the city, the new £200,000 investment in tackling food poverty, and the work we have done with partners to give Sheffielders access to good advice and guidance on how to maximise their incomes and make good choices and decisions with their money (Sheffield Money Support website). We've rolled out the £150 Council Tax rebate to eligible households and donated £20,000 to the dedicated cost-of-living fund that has been set up by South Yorkshire Community Foundation which will help foodbanks and our VCF sector support families across the city.

Our heat network supplies (affordable) heat to over 140 buildings covering homes and businesses, and other organisations in the city. As well as helping to support people and businesses in the city by providing affordable energy, it also helps to reduce our city's carbon emissions.

Questions of Councillor Lewis Chinchon to the Leader of the Council and Chair of the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee (Councillor Terry Fox)

Q.1 For those that pay their Council Tax by Direct Debit, are there any households eligible for the Council Tax rebate that have not yet received the £150 payment?

A.1 For households who made payments of Council Tax by direct debit in April, yes – 129,898 payments have been made. There remains a small number of around 500 households who paid by Direct Debit in April but who the Council could not pay the Energy Rebate by Direct Debit. They will be paid by Post Office voucher.

Around 5,000 households have recently applied to pay Council Tax by Direct Debit. These households will make their first payment in May and in line with Government Guidance, the Council will issue the rebate to these households when their May payment has been received and cleared. As these payments will be made up to 30th May the Council intends to make these payments in early June.

Q.2 What percentage of households eligible for the Council Tax rebate that do not pay their Council Tax by Direct Debit have received a letter that they can use to claim the rebate?

A.2 In order to avoid the need for those households who do not pay Council Tax by Direct Debit to have to apply for the Energy Rebate payment, the Council is using the Post Office Payout system to issue vouchers for the Energy Rebate which can be cashed at any Post Office. As at 27th May, 2022, details of 16,000 households (approx. 20%) of vouchers had sent to the Post Office for them to issue the vouchers. The precise date that these are received will be determined by the Post Office. The Council intends for the Post Office to be able to issue all eligible households with a payment voucher by the end of June.

Q.3 When will the discretionary scheme be open for applications from those that are not liable for Council Tax but are liable for energy bills?

A.3 The Council is still working through the detail of how the Discretionary Scheme will operate but expects to be able to launch the discretionary scheme in June. Where possible the Council intends to automatically award the Rebate to those eligible households it can identify with an application process being made available for other households who may be eligible for the Rebate.

Question of Councillor Tim Huggan to the Chair of the Communities, Parks and Leisure Policy Committee (Councillor Richard Williams)

Q. What plans are there to install electric charging points for 'Concession' Vehicles in Sheffield's Parks. In particular, could the new Committee, as part of the Bolehills Pavilion rebuild, consider having an external electric point installed as part of the upcoming rebuild?

A. Initial work has been done assessing where electric points could be installed to support 'concession' vehicles in parks – largely ice cream vans at this stage, whilst also looking at other uses for the power outlets including additional event use and catering units. We have also included the need to move to electric power (over diesel generators) in the ice cream tenders within parks recently.

The current Bolehills Pavilion rebuild does not have plans for external power supplies, but we will review the project to assess whether the power supplies to the building can support additional external power requirements. This would then provide the opportunity for further external supply (likely located away from the building) to be connected at a later date in a location appropriate for any desired catering / ice cream use.

Questions of Councillor Sophie Thornton to the Chair of the Housing Policy Committee (Councillor Douglas Johnson)

Q.1 What is the current number of outstanding or incomplete council house repairs?

A.1 Overdue Repairs have reduced significantly over the last three months, from 8,360 to 5,922 at present (30% reduction) showing an improving trend in terms of performance.

New repair requests continue to be 25% above pre-pandemic levels with the size and scope of works also increasing. Despite this, the service is working hard to clear the backlog of works and to improve our response times going forwards.

The implementation of the new IT system into the service is improving the planning, organising and performance management of our responses to repairs. The Repairs Service continue to encourage overtime, recruit trades staff, and to work with agencies and subcontractors to increase capacity and speed up the reduction of overdue jobs.

Following extensive consultation and negotiation with the Trade Unions and the workforce, new terms and conditions come into effect from 1st July within the Repairs Service. These changes will address a number of legacy issues with the workforce and deliver efficiencies through an extended working day, start and finish on site and flexible working.

Q.2 What was the average waiting time for a council house repair issue to be resolved over the last 3 months? and what was the longest wait?

A.2 The average waiting time was 21.96 days between February 2022 to April 2022.

The longest wait was 818 days in relation to a repair to front door required to make the door fire safety compliant. However, this was partly due to ongoing issues with agreeing access to the property with the tenant. Numerous appointments were made with the tenant to undertake the work and the repairs “no access” process was invoked. This included home visits to the tenants by Neighbourhood Officers, referrals to Legal Services and legal letters being sent to the tenant by Repairs and Maintenance and Housing regarding no access and breach of tenancy. So, it isn't a true reflection of delays caused by the Repairs and Maintenance Service.

Many of the older repairs are complex and similar in nature to this example and require intervention across a number of Council services in order to resolve them.

Q.3 What was the average waiting time on the council house repairs phone line before answering each month in the last 3 months? and what was the longest wait?

A.3 Waiting times at the Repairs Contact Centre for the last three months are as follows:

	March	April	May (up to and including 25.05.22)
Average waiting time	33 minutes	23 minutes	9 minutes
Longest wait	166 minutes	152 minutes	116 minutes

During this time, the Repairs Contact Centre has trained other contact centre staff to handle repairs calls, as well as ensuring that tenants are contacted by the Repairs Service where appointments need to be rearranged. These actions have reduced average call handling times by around one minute per call. With lower handling times and more resources in place, the Contact Centre has answered on average 730 calls per day in May, equating to 88% of all calls.

The Repairs Team are working with Housing Neighbourhood Teams and have trained over 200 staff to be able to order repairs into the new repairs system whilst visiting tenants, avoiding the need for tenants to contact the service directly.

The Repairs Team are currently developing an online portal which will give tenants the option to order repairs online, further reducing demand on the contact centre.

Q.4 How many repair issues have been ‘closed’ each month in the last three months as a result of not being able to make contact with a resident?

A.4 The following numbers of repairs closed due to no access (for response, planned and gas related repairs) is as follows:

February	35
March	233
April	200
TOTAL	486

The new repairs system has improved functionality which confirms the appointment with the tenant via a text message and also generates a reminder via text message on the day of the appointment. The level of repairs not being able to be undertaken due to the lack of access to

properties remains a significant issue, and the Repairs Service and Housing Neighbourhood Teams are working closely to put processes in place to more effectively deal with this issue when it arises.

Q.5 How many council housing residents are currently in temporary accommodation due to maintenance issues at their primary residence?

A.5 There are about 500 families in temporary accommodation currently, but I don't have a figure for how many are due to maintenance issues.

Q.6 How many evictions have there been from Council housing in the last three months? Can you give a breakdown of the reasons why these evictions have taken place?

A.6 The number of evictions for rent arrears for February, March and April 2022 was **17; and for ASB, 4**

Q.7 How many eviction notices have been served against Council housing residents in the last three months? Also, could you give a breakdown of the reasons why these notices have been served?

A.7 The term "eviction notice" can lead to confusion by being used in different ways and can mask the fact that all tenants have important legal rights.

A Notice Seeking Possession is served as a warning to secure tenants before a decision is made whether to apply to court for permission to end the tenancy through a possession order.

The number of Notice Seeking Possessions served for rent arrears for February, March and April 2022 was **805 and, for ASB, 28**

Q.8 Can you please give the Council an update on ongoing work to properly insulate and damp-proof Council properties?

A.8 The LAD 2 (Green Homes Grant funding – Phase 2) project is currently on site with the intention of delivering circa £1.4m of energy efficiency and retrofit works to 502 council homes. The work includes installing loft and cavity insulation, improving ventilation, new windows and doors in addition to installing a limited number of PV panels on suitable properties. In addition to this, we are also undertaking further insulation works to lofts through our current pitched roofing contract through Avonside and our Elementals

contract with Novus. Any damp proof works identified in properties through the Elementals contract will be carried out as part of the kitchen / bathroom refurbishment works to those properties.

157 properties have had retrofit surveys completed with the latest surveys received being assessed prior to instructing the works.

We are currently carrying out works to 141 properties where there 205 measures (a mix of cavity and loft insulation, double glazed windows and doors and Solar PV installations)

We currently anticipate that there are 35 properties with completed measures that we await PAS 2035 certification for. Anticipated contract completion date for the works to the 502 properties is the end of September 2022

We recognise, however, that we need to do more to improve the energy efficiency of our housing stock and address the ongoing cost of living. To achieve our 2030 Zero Carbon goal, we will need to retrofit homes to a net zero energy standard. In accordance with the motion passed at February Council, I will wish to come back to a future meeting to report on the Council's investigation into financially sustainable models that will deliver that standard.

Question of Councillor Shaffaq Mohammed to the Co-Chairs of the Transport, Regeneration and Climate Policy Committee (Councillor Julie Grocutt and Councillor Mazher Iqbal)

Q. How many cycle storage places have been installed both in the City Centre? And across the wider city in the last 12 months?

A. The City Council has funded 28 cycle storage spaces in total, none in the city centre.

Questions of Councillor Tim Huggan to the Co-Chairs of the Transport, Regeneration and Climate Policy Committee (Councillor Julie Grocutt and Councillor Mazher Iqbal)

Q.1 As part of the Crookes Low Traffic Neighbourhood, we were shown maps with road crossings, when will these road crossings be put in?

A.1 The results from the workshops and the engagement website clearly identified a desire for improved light controlled pedestrian crossings as part of the Crookes Active Travel Neighbourhood – so three crossings were added to the scope of the scheme. The work on providing the ‘dropped’ crossing down to carriageway level is planned to be completed at all three sites by mid-June. The installation of the temporary traffic lights is currently planned to be during the week beginning 27th June.

Q.2 As part of the Crookes Low Traffic Neighbourhood, it is intended that Cycle Storage would be put in on Crookes, when is this to happen?

A.2 The scheme includes a budget for secure cycle storage in five locations within Crookes. The storage would be on street and take up a parking space of at least one car. We have recently asked residents to suggest locations for secure cycle storage, so we are working through how we assess these requests - including taking into account views on any lost parking on the street. We then want residents to be involved in the decision on the type of facility provided. This will take time, so don't expect the secure cycle parking to be available by the time the Crookes scheme is fully implemented. However, we would hope that they be available by late Autumn this year.

Q.3 As Chair, will you be attending any of the ‘Question and Answer’ sessions scheduled in June and July for residents in Crookes as part of the public consultation?

A.3 We have given a commitment to attend the Question-and-Answer sessions, diaries permitting once we have confirmation of the dates, and look forward to speaking to members of the public to hear their views on proposals. We

are keen to join local colleagues, working with local residents and the LACs to get the maximum benefit from the scheme.

Q.4 There has been yet another accident on Manchester Road involving a schoolchild, on the stretch of road adjacent to Tapton Fields. Are there any plans for further road safety measures so that schoolchildren for Lydgate Junior School, King Edward VII Lower School and Tapton School can get to school more safely?

A.4 Over the years, these schools have had input from the Road Safety Education Team covering key topics on how to travel safer. We continue to stay in contact with the schools and offer further sessions and help where needed.

We have no plans to stop the existing school crossing patrol at Lydgate.

We are working with Local Area Committees to develop a programme of sites that will see a rotation of Vehicle Activated Signs on key routes in Sheffield. The signs will display a 'smiley face' if speeds are less than 30mph. Although the implementation dates within the programme still need to be confirmed, two of the sites in the programme are Manchester Road – near Tapton Fields and Lydgate Lane.

Questions of Councillor Kurtis Crossland to the Co-Chairs of the Transport, Regeneration and Climate Policy Committee (Councillor Julie Grocutt and Councillor Mazher Iqbal)

Q.1 What is the current status of the Beighton 20mph zone?

A.1 The Beighton 20mph scheme is currently at the preliminary design stage. The speed surveys have been undertaken and analysed meaning that the boundary of the scheme is being confirmed. It is expected to be implemented this financial year, subject to the Traffic Regulation Order process and availability of materials. Updates will be reported through the relevant committee.

Q.2 Can you please provide the Council with an update on alleviating the parking issues around Rother Valley and Meadowgate Avenue?

A.2 There is a preliminary design for the Rother Valley scheme. This scheme in principle will seek to introduce parking restrictions in the residential areas whilst formalising parking in areas where it would be more appropriate. The scheme also seeks to improve the surface of the current off street parking area. This will be subject to further cost investigation but plans in advance

of community engagement, which is one of the next stages that will be arranged.

Questions of Councillor Martin Phipps to the Co-Chairs of the Transport, Regeneration and Climate Policy Committee (Councillor Julie Grocutt and Councillor Mazher Iqbal)

Q.1 The IPCC have described the climate emergency as code red for humanity, do you agree we need to act with urgency to address this, like the sky is falling in? Noting there is a 50:50 chance of overshooting a 1.5C rise in temperature within the next 5 years.

A.1 As the administration that commissioned the ARUP report, we fully agree that there is a need to act with significant pace in response to the Climate Emergency. The Council's recently adopted 10 Point Plan confirms our commitment to delivering on our Net Zero ambitions by 2030 and clearly sets out a framework approach to this. We have now also joined the UK:100 commitment to take bold action towards Net Zero.

A key part of our commitment is to develop decarbonisation route maps setting out action across priority areas. The Transport, Regeneration and Climate Committee will be working closely with officers, other Committees, key stakeholders and our communities as these develop. The Committee looks forward to receiving at their earliest opportunity, the plans of the other Policy Committees as to how they will contribute to the climate emergency.

Q.2 Do you acknowledge the need to revolutionise transport patterns, as in the "Pathways to zero carbon in Sheffield" Arup report, and will this be reflected in your draft work plan?

A.2 One of the key areas where action will be required is Transport. For a number of years, the emissions from transport have been the highest contributor to overall carbon emissions in Sheffield.

As you mention, the 'Pathways to Zero Carbon in Sheffield' report sets out that that transformational change will be required in order for Transport to reach Net Zero, including that car use needs to reduce by 66% by 2030, all vehicles will need to be decarbonised, freight trips will need to be consolidated.

This will be a major challenge but with 40% of our car trips being less than 1km in distance (a 10-12min walk) there are significant opportunities that we must develop as part of the development and delivery of the Transport Decarbonisation Routemap. Working with partners including SYMCA,

Transport Operators and our communities will be essential. Tackling this in the right way will also lead to people being healthier and more active, living in communities that are safer and more pleasant places to be, with cleaner air to breathe.

Q.3 Do you acknowledge the importance of the Council acting to improve public transport and walking and cycling infrastructure?

A.3 I am sure I can speak on behalf of all the Committee when I say yes, absolutely.

Q.4 Do you support, in principle, the roll out of bus lanes and segregated cycle lanes, including the necessary impacts of this in reduction to space for private cars and parking?

A.4 We are keen to work with all members of the Policy Committee on how we collectively respond the challenges faced by increasing private car use.

Q.5 Do you acknowledge the need to raise our aspirations as a region for public transport, noting the region's failure to secure funding from the Bus Improvement Plan that was submitted?

A.5 Yes, clearly the result of the BSIP announcement was a huge blow to the region. If the Government is serious about levelling up then they should understand the importance that public transport plays. We are keen that the Committee works with the South Yorkshire Mayor to try and understand what happened. The feedback to this will be invaluable as we need to understand how this can be avoided in the future.

Q.6 Do you acknowledge the benefits of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods and how they contribute to improved walkability in neighbourhoods, which is an aim of revolutionising transport patterns?

A.6 Yes, along with the benefits they also bring to road safety.

Q.7 Will you commit to including in your work plan, for investigation, the Workplace Parking Levy which could fund and attract funding for extending the tram network, bus lanes, subsidies and network improvements, segregated cycle lanes, and improved walking surfaces?

- A.7 Investment in our city is vital. Many businesses in the city are SME's and under the current climate I feel it would be unfair to put a further tax burden on them. However, any committee member is able to add items to the work plan for consideration by the whole committee.

Question of Councillor Lewis Chinchen to the Co-Chairs of the Transport, Regeneration and Climate Policy Committee (Councillor Julie Grocutt and Councillor Mazher Iqbal)

Q. Given the current cost of living pressures and the difficulties facing businesses in the city centre, will the relevant committee(s) reconsider the rise in parking charges due to take effect from 1st June?

A. This was not a decision an entirely Labour-led administration would have made last year.

As in previous years, we believe that we need to do everything we can to encourage sustainable transport usage, and that given the significant cost pressures on the council a rise in line with last year's Retail Price Index would have been the correct course of action.

Moreover, given the significant cost-of-living crisis affecting everyone, and the incredible rises in fuel duty, I believe that the above RPI parking charges rise should not have been enacted without further consideration of it's impact, and I will put this decision to the Transport, Regeneration and Climate committee to consider further as to whether this rise should be reversed.

Question of Councillor Tim Huggan to the Chair of the Waste and Streetscene Policy Committee (Councillor Joe Otten)

Q. What Plans have been left for the introduction of a household food waste by the Cabinet Member responsible for this? Will the Committee be looking at this in the coming months?

A. We are keen to ensure that we can secure new burdens funding from Government for introducing weekly food waste collections. New burdens funding is allocated when the Government mandates increased services, such as food waste collections through the Environment Act, 2021.

In the meantime, I am pleased to announce that, working with Veolia, we are preparing for the roll out of food waste collection with a small trial – less than 10,000 households and for 12 weeks. Proposals for this will be considered by the Waste and Street Scene Policy Committee in June and evidence from the trial will be used to inform the subsequent city wide roll out.