

Communities, Parks and Leisure Policy Committee

Meeting held 14 November 2022

PRESENT: Councillors Richard Williams (Chair), Marieanne Elliot (Group Spokesperson), Sue Alston, Alan Hooper, Bernard Little, Karen McGowan, Peter Price, Fran Belbin (Substitute Member) and Mary Lea (Substitute Member)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tony Downing and Paul Wood.

2. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

2.1 It was explained that there was a closed part of the report at item 10 in the agenda which was not available to the public and press because it contained exempt information described in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) relating to financial and business affairs. The Committee were asked to formally exclude the public and press for the discussions on this item to allow for consideration of the sensitive information.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 There were no formal declarations of interest made at the meeting.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

4.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 26th Sept 2022 were approved as a correct record.

4.1.1 Cllr Little suggested that it would be useful for members of the public to have some context added to the minuting of public questions for clarity.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

5.1 Rebecca Clow submitted the following petition on 'Safe Youth Spaces' which was read out on her behalf:

We the undersigned petition the Council to put more funding into safe youth spaces as there has been an increase in youth crime, and many young people do not feel as if they have a safe place. We believe that more youth spaces will lead to less youth crime and an increase in young people feeling safe and even getting support for issues including mental health.

Answer

Sheffield City Council Community Youth Services has increased youth provision in the last year since Aug 2021. We have developed youth provision both centre based and street based to cover all 28 wards in the city, some more than one session per week. This development is ever increasing and we have seen 5 street based youth session convert into centre based youth provisions in partnership with local community organisations.

We have also increased our youth activities offer to include full and meaningful school holiday programs taking young people on trips and visits including weekend residential. This year one activity saw 120 young people attend a trip to flamingo land alone.

We have delivered two consecutive dark nights programs which have been described by South Yorkshire Police as the most beneficial ever seeing a significant decrease in youth related anti-social behaviour in this space of time.

We have recently undertaken a restructure of our Community Youth Services which intended to reduce management structures and increase frontline roles that support young people which includes our community youth prevention roles which support young people in 1-1 in early intervention work which can include emotional and mental wellbeing skills and strategies.

Sheffield City Council has also just launched a universal youth work grant to support grassroots community organisations to apply for up to 20,000 to develop more universal community youth sessions for young people. The council is also in the process of preparing a bid to the national Youth Investment Fund to apply for significant funding that can create, develop or regenerate our youth buildings ensuring they are better equipped, better placed and more modern/relevant for young people in communities.

Alongside all of this work we are also now actively developing youth consultation to better understand, from the voice of young residents' what young people's expectations are of youth service providers in Sheffield.

5.2 Andy Kershaw attended the Committee and asked the following questions which the Chair promised written answers to:

Q1. The issue of the Rose Garden Cafe in Graves Park has given rise to a number of questions about how the Parks & Countryside service communicates with community groups such as our campaign and the established 'friends' groups. Would the committee please undertake a review into how the council engages with such groups and in particular where such decisions as the one to close the Rose garden Cafe with 15 minutes notice to the staff are taken and handled?

Q2. I note that the Committee is responsible for 'Community Development' and 'Voluntary & Community Sector liaison and engagement'. In what way does the committee understand that this is

undertaken in parks and green spaces in the City in any meaningful way?

Q3. Parks are huge 'green meeting spaces' for people and given the importance of social contact both during and following the Covid-19 pandemic, what role does the committee see as its role in relation to promoting social contact and the provision of social hubs or meeting places, such as the Rose Garden café and other buildings in Sheffield?

Q4. Given the alarming and very concerning report from the Director of Operational Services to the Finance Sub Committee on Monday 7th Nov (herewith: [Draft Protocol for Cabinet Reports \(sheffield.gov.uk\)](https://www.sheffield.gov.uk)) regarding the parlous state of the 182 council and community buildings, including some of our City's most iconic and historic buildings) what role does the committee propose to have in engaging with citizens and communities to open up meaningful dialogue to ensure the involvement of citizens affected by the potential decisions contemplated in the report?

Q5. Please supply a list of the 182 buildings mentioned at the Finance subcommittee on the 7th of November as requiring £200 million worth of repairs and maintenance.

Q6. Please supply a separate list of the buildings mentioned as 'critical & essential' needing £48m spending as a matter of urgency.

Q7. Please supply a list of all buildings owned by the council in public parks in Sheffield and please indicate if any of the buildings mentioned in question one and two are featured.

Q8. In relation to question three above please indicate which buildings are listed buildings in public parks in Sheffield.

5.3 Michael Booth from the Sheffield Allotment Federation attended the Committee and asked the following questions which the Chair answered:

Q1. Why has the allotment office paid for a private company to do a rent survey, then undemocratically ignore the results and try and get a 5.5% rent increase for 2024-2025.

A1. The survey was undertaken by Sheffield City Council's Parks and Countryside Team on Citizenspace, an online platform widely used by the Council for consulting with communities. No private company was involved.

In response to the question regarding tenant's preferences about rent increases, 56.78% of respondents were in favour of some degree of rent increase. We have therefore responded to that feedback and are proposing a below-inflation increase of 5.5%.

Q2. Why is the allotment office manned mainly by part time officers,

allotment holders repeatedly say that this is why they are getting a poor service, because there is no continuity of service and the feeling is full time offices would be a better use of allotment funds.

A2. Sheffield City Council employees have a statutory right to request flexible working. The Council understands that the ability to work flexibility allows employees to have a better work-life balance and realise their potential.

Collectively our officers provide a service across the full working week during office hours (and outside of office hours in emergencies where possible). This support includes site visits and inspections and administrative support. The main preliminary points of contact, the email inbox and the telephone number 0114 2500500 are staffed throughout the week. Urgent matters which cannot wait until the relevant officer is available are always dealt with promptly.

The results of our customer satisfaction survey conducted in 2018 indicated that overall customers are happy with the service.

Q3. Why do some tenants subsidise other tenants.

A3. We want to ensure that as many people as possible are able to access allotments. We offer concessions to support those in receipt of certain benefits to enjoy the same opportunities as those who are not.

Q4. who is setting the policy for the allotments, is it the allotment offices or the councillors.

A4. The governance and decision-making process will vary, however, the Allotment Advisory Group is consulted on policy changes and ongoing areas of work. This is attended and chaired by Councillors, with representatives from Allotment Societies and the Allotment Federation. It is the first point of contact for the Allotment Office for all areas of work including the review of policies, target setting for the year and a steer on spending priorities for site improvements. Proposals are shared for discussion and an advisory input.

In the last year, as part of a review of our overall Allotment Strategy the Allotment Advisory Group members have been fully involved in working groups to enable a collaborative review of our policies and handbook, this engagement has been greatly appreciated. This will continue over the winter, with additional engagement with the wider allotment community. Once the consultation is completed and drafts of all the new policies are prepared, Councillors will take a decision on whether these are adopted.

6. WORK PROGRAMME

- 6.1 The Principal Democratic Services Officer presented the Work Programme and informed Committee that although it contained suggestions for what it may

contain, it was up to the Committee to decide. The Committee were asked to agree the set of recommendations in the report and give consideration to any necessary additions and amendments. Future allocations and referrals in section 2.0 of the report were also pointed out.

6.1.2 Cllr McGowan suggested it would be useful to have a few dates to choose from regarding site visits.

6.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:**

1. That the Committee's work programme, as set out in Appendix 1 be agreed, including any additions and amendments identified in Part 1;
2. That consideration be given to the further additions or adjustments to the work programme presented at Part 2 of Appendix 1; and
3. That 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.

7. **FAMILY HUB & START FOR LIFE PROGRAMME VERBAL UPDATE**

7.1 The Service manager introduced the item and gave a presentation family hub, start for life services, next steps, budgets to plan against, timeline and areas of focus.

7.1.1 Members raised question and points. Responses were given surrounding the amount of hubs across the city, utilisation of funding, family needs, multi-agency support, parenting hub and local needs.

8. **ASYLUM DISPERSAL GRANT**

8.1 The Head of Communities introduced the report alongside the Strategic Lead for Asylum and Migration. The report outlined the provision that has been made for an Asylum Dispersal Grant to be paid to Local Authorities, along with additional funding to 'recognise the existing contribution and longstanding support' of local authorities accommodating asylum seekers.

The purpose of the report sought endorsement by the committee of the proposed allocation of funding from the grant to support development of capacity to promote strong city leadership, a stepping-stone towards growth within the VCFS and strategic work to ensure a good quality, consistent and effective response to those seeking asylum and refuge in the city

8.1.1 The Business Improvement Manager agreed to come back to the committee with information on funding support in regard to unaccompanied minors.

8.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That the Communities, Parks and Leisure Policy Committee:-

1. Endorses the use of the Asylum Dispersal Grant and Asylum Dispersal funding to be utilised as detailed in this report, with the purpose of:
 - Providing funding for the continuation of the current Communities Asylum & Migration team function to continue beyond March 2023.
 - Supporting identified partners to provide strategically important, good quality services known to benefit those seeking asylum and sanctuary.
 - Provide an Open Grant Pot for bids from a broad range of organisations working for the benefit of the asylum and refugee community.

2. Approves the Council acting as accountable body for this purpose.

8.3 **Reasons for Decision**

- 8.3.1 Given what we know about current numbers in the national, and local asylum estate, retention of refugees in the city and the importance of developing support for refugees to achieve socio-economic success, it is vital that we look beyond short-term demand regarding placement and care of asylum seekers in the city.
- 8.3.2 This funding is an opportunity to think not only operationally, but strategically to maximise impact for the city in the longer term.
- 8.3.3 This funding will be significant to enable systemic change and an important step in placing the foundations for an integrated, prosperous, inclusive city.
- 8.3.4 The recommendation will support development of capacity to promote strong city leadership, a stepping-stone towards growth within the VCFS and strategic work to ensure a good quality, consistent and effective response to those seeking asylum and refuge in the city.

8.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

- 8.4.1 The Asylum Dispersal Grant will enable Sheffield to begin to address systemic inequality between asylum seekers and those who have sought refugee status and sanctuary via other routes of entry, including provision of wrap support for this vulnerable group. Given the clear benefit, other potential action e.g. to decline the funding, was rejected.

9. **PROPOSAL FOR 2024/2025 ALLOTMENT RENTS**

- 9.1 The Service Manager alongside the Head of Parks and Countryside introduced the report which sought approval for an increase in allotment rent and water charges for 2024/2025 by 5.5% (an increase below current inflation).

- 9.1.1 Members raised points and questions. It was agreed that an up to date answer would be provided to the committee on the possibility of spreading rent on a monthly basis and a future briefing was promised on the Allotment Service.

9.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That the Communities, Parks and Leisure Policy Committee:-

1. That the rent for allotments in 2024/2025 is increased by 5.5%
2. That this increase is at a below-inflation increase for 2024/2025 only, due to the current cost of living crisis.

9.3 **Reasons for Decision**

- 9.3.1 The recommendation to increase the rents by 5.5% in 2024/25 protects the delivery of the service to a degree, whilst taking account of the results of consultation.

9.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

- 9.4.1 Rents could be left at the same level. However due to inflation this would effectively be akin to a reduction in budget; quite a significant one due to the current high level of inflation. This was rejected because the current allotment budget is not felt to be larger than needed. A significant reduction in budget would decrease the level of service and site improvements.
- 9.4.2 An increase of 9.4% in line with inflation was initially considered, however this was rejected following the outcomes of consultation.
- 9.4.3 Rents could be increased by a larger amount, but this would go against the outcomes of the consultation. Considering the results of the consultation questionnaire in January 2018, discussions at the Allotment Advisory Group, the survey of October 2022 and the need to deliver the service, an increase of 5.5% (below inflation) has emerged as the overall preferred option.

10. **PLAYZONES FUNDING APPLICATION SITE SELECTION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT APPROACH**

- 10.1 The service manager for Physical Activity Sport and Health introduced the report which sought approval of a site selection and community engagement approach for the PlayZones funding programme.

A PlayZones funding stream was launched by the Football Foundation in 2022, the funding is used to create safe, inclusive, and accessible outdoor sports facilities that bring communities together through recreational forms of football and a range of other sports and physical activities. The fund will enable the refurbishment and creation of multi use games areas across the City.

- 10.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That the Communities, Parks and Leisure Policy Committee:-

1. Approve the proposed approach to:

- a. site selection as set out in the report.
- b. community engagement outlined in the report.

2. Notes:

- a. the proposed consortium approach to the development of the funding application.
- b. that a final list of sites will be reported to the Communities, Parks and Leisure Committee.
- c. that if secured, any capital funding associated with this funding will be presented to the Strategy and Resources Committee for approval.

10.3 Reasons for Decision

10.3.1 The Football Foundation Playzones Programme provides an opportunity for us to increase the quality and usability of a significant number of multi-use games areas across the city.

10.3.2 The PlayZones programme will enable us to provide facilities and activities for communities and target groups who currently face barriers to getting active. This will enable us to tackle inequalities.

10.3.3 The site selection and community engagement approach outlined in the above report is required to ensure we identify the most feasible sites that can reach our target groups; are supported by local communities; are able to be effectively activated via our partner organisations and can pass the through planning and design phase successfully.

10.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected

10.4.1 The option of not applying for the PlayZones programme has been considered. This has been rejected as it would mean we do not secure a significant amount of investment into Sheffield outdoor sport facilities, which is a key priority in our Sport and Leisure Strategy. The condition of multi-use games areas would not be improved, gaps in provision could not be resolved and those communities who most need these facilities and their activation would miss out on this opportunity.

11. UPDATE ON SPORT/LEISURE & ENTERTAINMENT COMMISSIONING

11.1 The Head of Sport, Leisure and Health introduced the report which provided an update to members of the Communities, Parks and Leisure Committee on progress made towards implementing the outcomes of the Leisure Review Report which was approved by the Co-operative Executive in November 2021. Including progress towards appointing a new operator for Sport, Leisure and Entertainment Venues from September 2024.

11.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That the Communities, Parks and Leisure Policy

Committee:-

1. That members of the Communities, Parks and Leisure Committee note the content of the report, including the envisaged approach to procurement and the inclusion of social outcome requirements within the Specification for Services.

11.3 Reasons for Decision

- 11.3.1 It is expected that development of the Procurement Strategy and detailed Specification for Services will help to enhance the offer to customers and communities. An improved offer will attract and retain increased participation and usage of venues.
- 11.3.2 The Leisure Review approved in November 2021 has shown that the procurement of an external partner from 2024 is the most financially advantageous and returns the highest level of income to the Council.
- 11.3.3 The external procurement exercise will also provide a greater level of financial certainty as a management fee will be set as part of the contract procurement and financial risk can be transferred to the external partner.

11.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected

- 11.4.1 The Council has reviewed three possible options for the future management of facilities. This included in house, a Local Authority Trading Company (LATC) and appointment of an external partner. The in house and LATC options were not selected as they are more expensive and present a greater level of financial uncertainty and risk to the Council.

12. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT - MONTH 6

- 12.1 The Director of Finance and Commercial Services introduced the report which brought the Committee up to date with the Council's financial position as at Month 6 2022/23.

- 12.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That the Communities, Parks and Leisure Policy Committee:-

1. Note the Council's financial position as at the end of September 2022 (month 6).

12.3 Reasons for Decision

- 12.3.1 The paper is to brought the committee up to date with the Council's current financial position as at Month 6 2022/23.

12.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected

- 12.4.1 The Council is required to both set a balance budget and to ensure that in-year income and expenditure are balanced. No other alternatives were considered.

13. BUDGET POSITION FOR YEAR 2023/2024

- 13.1 The Director of Finance and Commercial Services introduced the report which updated the Policy Committee on the progress of the 2023/24 budget process. The appendix contained specific budget proposals that the Committee were asked to endorse.
- 13.1.1 The Chair explained that the meeting would be moved into closed session and stated that it was due to the appendix containing exempt information described in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) relating to financial and business affairs.
- 13.1.2 The meeting was re-opened for the vote as detailed in section 9.2.
- 13.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That the Communities, Parks and Leisure Policy Committee:-
1. Note the update on the Council's 2023/24 budget position.
 2. Endorse the budget proposals set out in Appendix 1.
- 13.3 **Reasons for Decision**
- 13.3.1 The Council is required by law to set a balanced budget each year. This report is pursuant to that objective and is in line with the process and timetable agreed by the Strategy and Resources Committee on 31 May 2022 and 5 July 2022.
- 13.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**
- 13.4.1 The Council is required to both set a balance budget and to ensure that in-year income and expenditure are balanced. No other alternatives were considered.