



## Report to Policy Committee

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**Report of:** *Ajman Ali*

**Report to:** *Waste & Street Scene Policy Committee*

**Date of Decision:** *20<sup>th</sup> December 2023*

**Subject:** *Response to the Street Tree Inquiry – update on implementing recommendations within the Waste & Street Scene Policy Committee’s remit.*

Type of Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) undertaken	Initial <input type="checkbox"/>	Full <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Insert EIA reference number and attach EIA – EIA 2121		
Has appropriate consultation/engagement taken place?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Has a Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) been undertaken?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### Purpose of Report:

On March 6<sup>th</sup> 2023, Sir Mark Lowcock KCB published the Sheffield Street Tree Inquiry Report, which contained detailed findings, observations and 11 recommendations for the Council and their Streets Ahead contractor, Amey.

The Council accepted all of the Inquiry’s recommendations and conclusions, and on the 19th June 2023, the Strategy & Resources Policy Committee agreed the recommendations in the report “[Learning from the Past and Moving Ahead – response to the Sheffield Street Tree Inquiry](#)” which set out the actions the Council would take to implement the recommendations of the Inquiry.

Actions in recommendations 5-7 from the response to the Street Trees Inquiry, relating to the Sheffield Street Tree Partnership and Managing Streets Ahead, sit within the area of responsibility of the Waste & Street Scene Policy Committee. This report provides the Waste & Street Scene Policy Committee with an update on progress in implementing these actions.

**Recommendations:** The Waste & Street Scene Policy Committee is recommended to:

Note the update on delivering the actions relating to recommendations 5-7 of the response to the Sheffield Street Tree Inquiry.

**Background Papers:**

**Sheffield Street Tree Partnership Strategy -**

[sheffield.gov.uk/sites/default/files/docs/roads-and-pavements/managing-trees/sheffield-street-tree-strategy-2021.pdf](https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/sites/default/files/docs/roads-and-pavements/managing-trees/sheffield-street-tree-strategy-2021.pdf)

**Sheffield Street Trees Inquiry**

[https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-03/sheffield\\_street\\_trees\\_inquiry\\_report.pdf](https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-03/sheffield_street_trees_inquiry_report.pdf)

**Sheffield City Council Response to the Street Trees Inquiry**

[Learning from the Past and Moving Ahead – response to the Sheffield Street Tree Inquiry](#)

Lead Officer to complete:-		
1	I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed.	Finance: <i>Adrian Hart</i>
		Legal: <i>Rob Parkin</i>
		Equalities & Consultation: <i>Ed Sexton</i>
		Climate: <i>Laura Ellendale</i>
	<i>Legal, financial/commercial and equalities implications must be included within the report and the name of the officer consulted must be included above.</i>	
2	<b>SLB member who approved submission:</b>	<i>Ajman Ali</i>
3	<b>Committee Chair consulted:</b>	<i>Councillor Joe Otten</i>
4	I confirm that all necessary approval has been obtained in respect of the implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist and that the report has been approved for submission to the Committee by the SLB member indicated at 2. In addition, any additional forms have been completed and signed off as required at 1.	
	<b>Lead Officer Name:</b> <i>Richard Eyre</i>	<b>Job Title:</b> <i>Director of Street Scene &amp; Regulations</i>
	<b>Date:</b> 7-12-23	

## 1. PROPOSAL

- 1.1 On March 6<sup>th</sup> 2023, Sir Mark Lowcock KCB published the Sheffield Street Tree Inquiry Report, which contained detailed findings, observations and 11 recommendations for the Council and their Streets Ahead contractor, Amey.

The Council accepted all of the Inquiry's recommendations and conclusions, and on the 19th June 2023, the Strategy & Resources Policy Committee agreed the recommendations in the report "[Learning from the Past and Moving Ahead – response to the Sheffield Street Tree Inquiry](#)" which set out the actions the Council would take to implement the recommendations of the Inquiry. (Summary table of recommendations is attached at appendix 1)

Actions from recommendations 5-7 in the response to the Street Trees Inquiry, relating to the Sheffield Street Tree Partnership (**SSTP**) and Managing Streets Ahead, sit within the area of responsibility of the Waste & Street Scene Policy Committee.

The ongoing of these are:

### **Town Hall Plaque**

- To install a plaque to the street tree protests in the Town Hall alongside the Kinder Scout mass trespass plaque within the next 9 months and agree the budget to fund this.

### **Outstanding Core Investment Programme Design and Delivery**

- Deliver the commitment to have designs in place for all roads outstanding from 2018 by 6 March 2024, to have work completed on these roads through the 2024/25 financial year at the latest and refer to the Waste and Street Scene committee responsibility to hold the Council and Amey to the agreed work schedule.

### **Resilience of Resource for Sheffield Street Tree Partnership**

- Investigate how the SSTP can be supported to continuously improve;
- Where needed, make clear when the SSTP is the decision maker versus when its is being consulted or informed and develop refreshed guidance and supporting escalation processes as needed;
- Clarify how elected members can engage with and champion the SSTP and its work;

- Investigate how the Council and Amey can share more information with the SSTP to enable informed debate and input on key issues;
- Continue to invite external scrutiny and integrate emerging good practice and guidance into the city's approach to street trees, including how to draw on expertise where needed (on an ongoing or call-off basis).

### **Streets Ahead Contract Performance**

- Create new roles (and leadership capacity) by October 2023 to:
  - continuously improve the way all parties meet the contract requirements, budget and statutory duties;
  - develop approaches which evolve and meet local needs now and in the long-term;
  - increase capacity on the preparation, design, delivery and recording of work to existing and new sections of the highway across the city on new work and maintenance;
  - Instil a principle of working across Council boundaries so that the Streets Ahead contract supports other Council priorities, such as carbon reduction.
- Work with Amey to ensure that tree inspector capacity meets the needs of the current street tree stock and the ambitions of the SSTP strategy.
- Update and keep as a living document the Streets Ahead business case, in line with best practice recommended by CIPFA.
- Review the function of the strategic management board, including refreshing its terms of reference and membership. Make clear the interface between the Streets Ahead governance system and the Waste and Street Scene committee.
- Take forward a comprehensive analysis of the capacity and skills needed to manage the Streets Ahead contract strategically (horizon scanning and flexing to emerging needs) and how funding for these will be factored into the budget setting process. This will include setting out the safe level of management for a contract of this size. This will also include looking at how the Council can both build its own capacity and set up flexible arrangements to enable access to fixed-term expert capacity, particularly for specialist legal, finance and commercial resource.
- Develop high-level principles to set the approach for planning the end of the contract in 2037 and begin this work at least 7 years in advance of the end of the contract. This should be done

with advice from relevant experts, for example, the Infrastructure and Projects Authority, and in the knowledge that winding down the project will require more staffing than running it day-to-day.

- Work with other authorities and central government to understand any impact created by many PFI projects coming to an end within a short period of time.

- 1.2 Delivery of this activity is being led by the Director of Streetscene and Regulation and is set out in the Street Tree Inquiry Delivery Plan – Streets Ahead and SSTP. Governance is provided by:
- Monthly highlight reports to the Executive Director, Neighbourhood Services
  - Performance & Delivery Board (Update provided 14<sup>th</sup> November 2023)
  - This update to the Waste & Street Scene Policy Committee
  - Inclusion in the winter Strategy & Resources report
  - A progress report on the longer term evolution of the Sheffield Street Tree Partnership will be taken to the Strategy & Resources Committee in July 24.

The Delivery Plan is appended to this report (see appendix 2) and sets out progress against actions for the Committee's consideration. A summary of the key issues is set out below.

### 1.3 **Town Hall Plaque**

- 1.3.1 The Capital Delivery Service has drafted an initial design for the plaque with two options for wording. Initial, informal feedback was sought from key stakeholders, including Sheffield Street Tree Partnership, Sheffield Tree Action Groups and Waste and Street Scene Policy Committee members. Further involvement is now being planned with Sheffield Tree Action Groups to develop the plaque design which will be taken through a public consultation process prior to sign off, ready for manufacture and installation by March 6th 2024.

### 1.4 **Outstanding Core Investment Programme Design and Delivery**

- 1.4.1 At the point the tree replacement programme was paused in 2018, there were 78 streets from the original core investment programme (CIP) of the contract where surfacing was not completed.

Following the joint inspection programme between the Council, Amey and members of Sheffield Tree Action Group in 2019 a number of these have been addressed. Further progress has been made since by the Council, Amey and the Street Tree Partnership in collaboratively inspecting, assessing, designing and delivering engineering solutions and resurfacing works.

This means that the backlog of outstanding streets has been reduced by two-thirds to 26.

The Council's response to the Street Tree Inquiry committed to having designs in place for these remaining streets by March 2024, and to have the relevant engineering works to retain these trees and allow road and footway surfacing to be completed by the end of the 2024/25 financial year.

1.4.2 The high level plan for the design process for the outstanding Core Investment Programme streets has been agreed, and sets out clearly the roles and responsibilities of the Council, Amey and the Sheffield Street Tree Partnership:

- Amey prepare design/engineering solution and Road Safety Audits
- Designs shared with the Sheffield Street Tree Partnership (SSTP), who will have a fixed timescale to provide formal response.
- SCC prepares public consultation materials, incorporating SSTP's formal response.
- 3 week consultation with the public which may include engagement sessions
- Head of Highways to consider feedback and make a delegated decision on way forward. Where the decision is deemed contentious, it will be referred to Committee for a decision.

1.4.3 Work on the designs for the 26 roads which are outstanding is now underway. The most up to date position on these roads is included at appendix 3.

1.4.4 Whilst the design process is well underway, the challenges of designing solutions which retain as many trees as is possible and delivering a safe, compliant and accessible highway network has proven complex. Resolving these issues satisfactorily has caused some delays in the programme.

1.4.5 To increase capacity and provide assurance that the Council and Amey will meet the deadline set down in the Inquiry response, additional consultancy design resource has been commissioned to complete designs for 8 of the outstanding streets. There are also a range of other measures which are now in place to speed up the design process (set out in the delivery plan).

Both Amey, and the additional consultant have given assurances that detailed designs will be delivered by the March 24 deadline. The Director of Street Scene and Regulation is monitoring progress closely with weekly progress reports between all parties and will seek further mitigations, and escalate to this Committee, if required.

## 1.5 Resilience of Resource for the Sheffield Street Tree Partnership

- 1.5.1 Good progress has been made on providing resilience of resource for the Sheffield Street Tree Partnership.
- 1.5.2 As per the actions in the response to the Street Tree Inquiry: SCC Director level membership of the STTP and director level oversight from Amey has been implemented; annual meetings between SCC's Chief Executive and SSTP have been established; and recruitment of a Business Manager to provide dedicated administrative and facilitation support to the SSTP is complete.
- 1.5.3 The recommendations included an action to investigate how to support the Street Tree Partnership to continue to develop and continuously improve including looking at: decision making, elected member engagement, information sharing, external scrutiny and status. Progress highlights include:
- Supporting SSTP improvement activity including refreshing the SSTP Terms of Reference, SSTP website launch, developing a Partnership Charter, facilitating twice yearly SSTP Awaydays, grant funding a Partnership & University of Sheffield led project to develop a key SSTP priority – the Strategic Planting Palette.
  - Councillor engagement sessions were held during summer 2023 to help elected members understand the work of SSTP and how to engage with it; and lead members from the Waste & Street Scene Policy Committee attended the September SSTP meeting for a constructive discussion on how elected members can support the Partnership's work.
  - Implementation of Non-Disclosure Agreements to enable better information sharing with Partners around 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Tree reports for subsidence issues.
  - Grant funding Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust to host and manage the Partnership Manager role for a trial period of 12 months, providing greater autonomy for the Partnership.

We have plans in place to continue to develop this work with the Street Tree Partnership over the coming year.

## 1.6 Streets Ahead Contract Performance

- 1.6.1 Activity is on track to deliver the actions relating to Streets Ahead contract performance.
- 1.6.2 The refresh of the Streets Ahead Strategic Management Board was completed through a review of its Governance and Terms of Reference in September.

- 1.6.3 To address the recommendation around the strategic management of the Street Ahead contract, the Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA) have been engaged to carry out an Operational Health Check of the contract. This will include a full review of the contract delivery. The indicative timescale for this to be undertaken is February 24 but we are awaiting confirmation of the specific date.
- 1.6.4 Activity has not yet begun on the longer term actions around planning for the end of the contract. This will be programmed in for an appropriate time, following best practice and as per the recommendations in the response to the Street Tree Inquiry.

## **2. HOW DOES THIS DECISION CONTRIBUTE ?**

- 2.1 The response to the Street Tree Inquiry stated that agreement of the actions in the report would contribute to the ongoing reconciliation following the street trees dispute and enable the Council to take decisive shorter- and longer-term action to support reconciliation, improve the support to the Sheffield Street Tree Partnership, the management of the Streets Ahead contract and essential Council processes. It would also enable the people of Sheffield to see and keep track of the action being taken, to assure them of the Council's commitment to making systematic change in response to the report. This update contributes to that commitment, and aims to provide assurance to the Waste and Street Scene Policy Committee, and the people of Sheffield, that progress is being made towards implementing recommendations 5-7 of the Street Tree Inquiry Response.

## **3. HAS THERE BEEN ANY CONSULTATION?**

- 3.1 The recommendations and actions that this paper is reporting against were developed using Sir Mark Lowcock's Inquiry report as a foundation. The Inquiry received over 1.1 million documents and met with 159 people in private and 26 people at 32 hours of public hearings.

The development of the actions was further supported by engagement with individuals and services across the Council, including senior management and elected members; Amey; representations from individuals and representative groups; an Implementation Working Group with attendees external to the Council; and the Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) on 10 May, and the discussion sessions that followed it, which compiled views on implementation of the Streets Ahead recommendations. In completing the actions summarised in this report we have worked collaboratively with the SSTP and had informal conversations with a range of stakeholders around the progress towards the plaque.

- 3.2 Consultation is planned as part of the implementation of two of the actions referenced in this update report:

- i) Consultation will take place as part of the process for agreeing the design and wording of the Town Hall Plaque to the Street Tree Dispute.
- ii) Consultation will take place with Sheffield Street Tree Partnership and the public as part of the process for agreeing the designs for the streets outstanding from 2018.

Updates on this activity will be provided in any future updates to the Committee.

#### **4. RISK ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION**

##### **4.1 Equality Implications**

4.1.1 The actions agreed in the report to the Strategy & Resources Committee in June 2023 were developed with equalities implications in mind. The actions recommended to support the management of the Streets Ahead contract and Sheffield Street Trees Partnership, and that are therefore relevant to this update, underline the Council's commitment to ensuring good management of the city's green infrastructure for the benefit of all citizens. This will support the Sheffield Street Tree Partnership's Strategy aim to increase the city's tree canopy, bringing with it health benefits which particularly help those with existing health conditions, the very young and the elderly. The Strategy also aims to increase the equity of canopy cover, bringing the benefits to low-cover and more disadvantaged areas. During the dispute the Council at times used accessibility rationales to justify messaging around the removal of trees. The June report, and activity since then, does not do this as disabled people have a right to both accessible highways and green infrastructure.

4.1.2 The Equality Impact Assessment undertaken for the June S&R report is attached at appendix 4.

##### **4.2 Financial and Commercial Implications**

4.2.1 There are no financial or commercial implications in this report. The activity described in the report has been funded through existing budgets and funding identified in the June report to Strategy & Resources to facilitate the report's recommendations.

##### **4.3 Legal Implications**

4.3.1 There are no legal implications.

##### **4.4 Climate Implications**

4.4.1 A full climate impact assessment was not deemed necessary for the response to the Street Tree Inquiry, however the climate implications of

the actions in the report were considered in relation to the categories in the CIA tool. There are considered to be impacts in the following categories:

**Influence.** The actions within the response to the Street Tree Inquiry support the actions of the Sheffield Street Trees Partnership's (STTP) Strategy. STTP Strategy includes raising awareness of the benefits and value of street trees and driving community engagement with how they can be looked after. This is supported by community events such as the recent Tree Fayre and the new STTP website. The Strategy sees the Council working with partners to achieve aims including increasing the street tree canopy including increasing the benefits of this in low-cover and deprived areas.

**Nature and Land Use.** Increasing the street tree canopy will add to the city's green infrastructure and have a beneficial effect on carbon capture, and make sure tree planting considers climate resilience and contribution to biodiversity, as well as aesthetic appeal.

**Adaptation.** Increasing the street tree canopy including increasing the benefits of this in low-cover and deprived areas ensure the principle of Just Transition can be applied. Increased canopy cover can also help reduce the heat island effect during extreme heat events and improve the resilience of the city in the face of the impacts of climate change. It will be important to consider the predicted climate changes for the city in terms of average temperatures and rainfall when considering species suitability (this is being directly addressed through the SSTP Strategic Planting Palette project).

## 5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 The Waste and Street Scene Policy Committee requested a progress report on the implementation of the recommendations from the Street Tree Inquiry response that fall within its remit. No alternative options were therefore considered.

## 6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 This report sets out progress on delivering recommendations 5-7 of the response to the Street Tree Inquiry. The Waste & Street Scene Policy Committee is recommended to note the update.