

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – 4TH OCTOBER 2023

RESOLUTIONS PASSED AT THE MEETING

1. MORE CASH IN PEOPLE'S POCKETS AT CHRISTMAS

RESOLVED: That this Council:-

- (a) believes that the Conservatives have wreaked havoc on our economy, and notes that mortgage rates are soaring, economic growth is flat and working people are paying the price;
- (b) notes that the UK is forecast to have the highest inflation of any major economy this year which means rising prices, higher bills and less money in your pocket;
- (c) notes that prices of food and non-alcoholic beverages rose by 13.6% in the year to August 2023;
- (d) notes recent research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation which found that 5.7 million low-income households are having to cut down or skip meals because they don't have enough money for food;
- (e) notes that lots of people across Sheffield are struggling as prices and bills continue to rise and so recognises that tackling poverty is a year-round activity and not just for Christmas;
- (f) notes that wintertime can be an expensive time for lots of people, especially families;
- (g) notes that a lack of access to transport can exacerbate poverty due to difficulties getting to work and school on time, along with increasing isolation and loneliness, condemns the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority's upcoming reduction in bus services, and notes that the Bus Service Improvement Plan submitted by Dan Jarvis in October 2021 was rejected by the Government due to a 'lack of ambition', compared to West Yorkshire MCA which received £70m;
- (h) believes that a cash-first approach is an effective, direct way to provide financial help that trusts people to make the best choices for them;
- (i) notes that in July 2023, the Strategy and Resources Committee unanimously approved a spending plan for the Household Support Fund in 2023/24, based on detailed cohort analysis of people who are most affected by rising prices and bills, which included direct awards such as:-
 - (i) providing food vouchers worth £15 per week to children and families in need during school holidays; and

- (ii) providing payment to 6,316 households who are receiving Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Support, but do not receive one of the qualifying benefits, and as such, have not received the Cost-of-Living Payment;
- (j) notes, however, that there are also children who are in receipt of Universal Credit but who are ineligible for Free-school-meal due to the low threshold (income of £7,400) and that consideration needs to be given to how this cohort, expected to be around 4,000 children, can best be supported;
- (k) notes that the majority of these ~4,000 children would be supported by a policy which introduced free school meals for all primary students, and notes with deep disappointment that:-
 - (i) despite pressure from mayors, MP's and the National Education Union, the Labour Party has failed to commit to this relatively low cost measure; and
 - (ii) both the proposer and seconder, along with their Labour Group colleagues, failed to endorse this policy at the last meeting of the Council;
- (l) believes that, as long as the Labour Party fails to commit to providing free school meals to all primary school students and abolishing the two child benefit cap, they have no credibility on the Cost of Living crisis, and resolves that the Council write to both Keir Starmer and Rishi Sunak, urging them to commit to these policies; and
- (m) requests that Strategy and Resources Policy Committee look at fully costed proposals to help put cash in people's pockets, increasing and extending direct awards to those who most need it, with a report to Strategy and Resources setting out further options as soon as possible.

2. **FINANCING SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL AFTER THE NEXT GENERAL ELECTION**

RESOLVED: That this Council:-

- (a) notes:-
- (i) since 2010 Sheffield City Council has delivered £475 million of savings to off-set budget cuts, leaving £856 less per household to spend, compared to 2010-11 in real terms;
 - (ii) more Councils have forecast income less than their forecast expenditure in 2024/25 and are considering issuing a *Section 114 notice*;
 - (iii) Unison's head of local government says "*Council finances are in the direst of states*" and "*the squeeze on local budgets means that services either vanish or are scaled down dramatically*"; and
 - (iv) South Yorkshire NHS Integrated Care Board says "*People living in the most deprived parts of South Yorkshire will live on average 19 years more in poor health compared to those living in the least deprived areas*";
- (b) notes the forthcoming report by Prof. Richard Murphy of Sheffield University Management School, but that without knowing what the report will say, or what its recommendations will be, we cannot comment upon its contents;
- (c) believes that neither the Conservative or a potential Labour-led Government has a plan to ensure Councils are properly funded to deliver front-line services to the public;
- (d) believes that directly raising tax on individuals is the wrong approach to funding key public services, and instead favours taxing the enormous profits of organisations benefiting from the Cost of Living crisis such as water companies, oil and gas companies, and banks;
- (e) notes that in 2022, BP reported profits of £21.8bn and Shell reported profits of £32.2bn, while families struggled to pay their energy bills, and calls for a proper, one off windfall tax on the super-profits of oil and gas producers and traders;
- (f) believes that a Workplace Parking Levy would not target the 1%, but instead would create disincentives for businesses to locate in the City Centre and would pass costs on to consumers;
- (g) notes the significant increase in the repairs backlog following the insourcing of the housing repairs service, and expresses doubt over whether a wholly owned Council company would meet the Council's best value duty;
- (h) resolves to ask the relevant Policy Committees to consider placing on their work programmes consideration of every opportunity for investing in renewable

energy projects on Council land and buildings to generate energy and income;
and

- (i) further resolves that the Council write to both Keir Starmer and Rishi Sunak, calling for the proper funding of Councils to deliver local services.

3. PREVENTING ANOTHER BIRMINGHAM

RESOLVED: That this Council:-

- (a) notes with concern several recent high-profile Section 114 notices, particularly in Birmingham;
- (b) notes that Government funding has squeezed councils' budgets over recent years, although, as with Birmingham, in Sheffield there are other factors, and in particular:-
- (i) notes that since 2010 Sheffield has suffered from 13 years of austerity from the Coalition and Conservative governments;
- (ii) notes that this Council's funding has been cut by 29%, or £856 per resident in real terms since 2010, compared to the national average of 20% and £581 per resident; and
- (iii) believes government needs to step-up and provide fairer funding, and as a Council we should continue being vocal in our demands;
- (c) notes that of the £70m reserves set aside in 2021/22 to cover overspends and balance future budgets:-
- (i) the Co-Operative Executive, during the final year of the strong leader model, used £19.8m to cover the 21/22 budget overspend, and £15m to balance the 22/23 budget; and
- (ii) since then, under the committee system and no overall control, £5m was used to cover the 22/23 budget overspend, and no reserves were used to balance the 23/24 budget, leaving approximately £30m to cover future deficits, and thanks officers throughout the Council for their work in addressing very challenging budgets;
- (d) (i) notes that the Council has always balanced its budget; and

- (iii) notes that the Co-Operative Executive, when developing proposals for 2022/23, faced immediate challenges brought about by the covid pandemic and what this Council believes to be the woeful government settlement, most acutely in social care;
- (e) believes the introduction of the committee system and Liberal Democrat involvement has led to significantly improved financial management, as evidenced above;
- (f) believes that all BIPs as part of the 2024/25 budget must be deliverable, and also:-
 - (i) notes that the Medium-Term Financial Analysis (MTFA) highlights particular areas of pressure; high-cost placements for children in care, temporary accommodation, homelessness, and adult social care;
 - (ii) notes that nationally more children than ever are in the care system and their outcomes are getting worse, believes that the Government needs to support them significantly better and reduce cost of care packages, and notes that locally we are already working to ensure that the right costs for placements are being met and high-cost placements are being reviewed;
 - (iii) notes the continuing impact of the pandemic, with the high cost of care packages put in place during this time having a significant impact carrying into 2023/24; and
 - (iv) believes that the homelessness support provided by Government is woefully inadequate, noting that the Council is spending nearly £6million to bridge the gap between the amount accommodation costs to procure and the amount recovered via housing benefit;
- (g) notes that construction inflation is compromising the Stock Increase Programme, and believes the Council must consider alternative approaches to increasing affordable housing, including closer work with Housing Associations; and
- (h) therefore, resolves that the Council implement:-
 - (i) a relentless focus on delivering this year's budget and BIP initiatives;
 - (ii) a commitment for all budgets from the start of 2024/25 to include no undeliverable BIPs;
 - (iii) a budget setting and BIP process that clearly identifies the quarter in 2024/25 that each BIP will impact, and the part year savings clearly identified if not at the start of the financial year; and
 - (iv) a clear plan on how BIP savings will be delivered.

4.**PROTECTING SHEFFIELD FROM DANGEROUS DOGS**

RESOLVED: That this Council:-

- (a) welcomes the efforts of responsible dog owners in Sheffield who train their dogs properly resulting in well behaved dogs which offer companionship and enhance our communities;
- (b) notes the positive contribution made by responsible dog breeders which enable owners to select healthy well-adjusted dogs;
- (c) thanks dog shelters, charities and rescuers for their work caring for rescue dogs, and finding and supporting suitable new owners for them, and encourages those looking for a new dog to rehome a rescue;
- (d) however, believes we cannot ignore the appalling evidence and increasing number of dog related incidents and the harm they cause - to children and adults, as well as pets, wildlife and livestock;
- (e) notes that nationally around 9,000 people a year are admitted to hospital with severe dog bites - up from 7,500 in 2017 - costing the NHS an estimated £71 million;
- (f) notes with alarm the recent horrific dog attacks in Sheffield and around the country;
- (g) believes we have seen too many devastating injuries from dogs, with shocking life-changing injuries sustained for both adults and young children;
- (h) notes that South Yorkshire Police have seen the number of dog related incidents double in five years and in the first three months of 2023 they found that XL Bullies accounted for 25% of aggressive dogs seized;
- (i) believes that the rise in figures shows that more needs to be done to address unethical dog breeders, and to ensure that dogs are raised in a suitable environment by responsible owners;
- (j) believes that dangerous dogs put our dedicated, hardworking Sheffield City Council staff and key workers, including homecare assistants and postal workers, at risk and in needless danger; and

therefore this Council:-

- (i) condemns illegal dog breeding and puppy farming; and
- (ii) calls on the Government to implement the ban on XL bullies without delay;

- (k) recognises that ambiguity around the definition of the XL bully and similar dogs, with or without a ban, poses additional challenges for dog control and animal care officers, alongside additional demands on the service as more potentially dangerous animals are likely to be rejected by their owners;
- (l) condemns the illegal and barbaric practice of dog fighting, which contributes to the criminal breeding of highly aggressive dogs;
- (m) highly appreciates the good work by dog rescue charities to find homes for unwanted dogs, often working with dogs with difficult behaviour; and
- (n) welcomes the new kennelling strategy agreed by the Waste and Street Scene Policy Committee, which will improve the conditions which dogs under the Council's care are kept in, and deliver a cost saving of £54k per year.

This page is intentionally left blank