

Agenda Item 5

Council Meeting – 4th October 2023

Questions Received from Members of the Public, answered by the Relevant Policy Committee Chairs

Name of Questioner	Question	Relevant Policy Committee Chair(s)
Sue Owen	<p>The Labour Party has sought legal advice on the Economic Activity of Public Bodies (overseas matters) bill and Richard Kermer, KC has concluded: “The implications for local democracy, for the proud history in our regions of campaigning for global human rights, for using our economic clout for the promotion of human rights, for free speech in this country and for compliance with our international law obligations, are potentially profound.”</p> <p>In the light of the damage to local democracy that this bill would introduce, has Sheffield Council written a response to the consultation about the bill, and if yes, will they publish their response?</p> <p><i>An answer was provided at the meeting and the webcast and minutes (when published) can be found here:</i></p> <p>Agenda for Council on Wednesday 4 October 2023, 2.00 pm Sheffield City Council</p>	Cllr Tom Hunt (Leader of the Council & Chair of Strategy and Resources Policy Committee)
Dylan Lewis-Cresser	<p>What will the Council be doing to ensure that the benefits of Active Travel Neighbourhoods, as we've seen in Crookes & Walkley, are spread across the city, especially in areas in need of a social uplift?</p> <p><i>An answer was provided at the meeting and the webcast and minutes (when published) can be found here:</i></p> <p>Agenda for Council on Wednesday 4 October 2023, 2.00 pm Sheffield City Council</p>	Cllr Ben Miskell (Chair of Transport, Regeneration and Climate Policy Committee)
Christina Rhys	<p>I would like to know what the Council is planning to put in place to ensure that children walking to school who use a route along Nether Edge Road and Archer Lane can do so safely. I was dismayed to find there appears to be no mention of this in the report. For over a year the closure of Archer Lane created a wonderful way for children of all ages to reach their</p>	Cllr Ben Miskell (Chair of Transport, Regeneration and Climate Policy Committee)

	<p>schools safely (Holt House, Carter Knowle, Mercia and High Storrs). If Archer Lane re-opens there will be no time for children to adjust and learn the extremely hazardous crossings at every junction, as the floodgates open once again. These traffic conditions will be even worse than previously as Mercia now has its full quota of students.</p> <p>An answer was provided at the meeting and the webcast and minutes (when published) can be found here:</p> <p>Agenda for Council on Wednesday 4 October 2023, 2.00 pm Sheffield City Council</p>	
Simon Sylvester	<p>Being a resident of Archer Lane, I have experienced at first hand the provocative political campaigning regarding the Nether Edge Active Travel Neighbourhood.</p> <p>Following the decision made by the Transport, Regeneration and Climate Policy Committee to re-open Archer Lane, I viewed the webcast of the Committee meeting.</p> <p>In their deliberations concerning the Nether Edge Active Travel Neighbourhood, Councillors make hardly any reference to the research commissioned by their own Committee.</p> <p>Few Members take up the opportunity for debate during proceedings. It appears that private email messages received by councillors, and feedback from Party colleagues, all have greater influence than commissioned research.</p> <p>Would you agree that the final decision to re-open Archer Lane was informed more by undisclosed Party interests than by presented evidence or informed debate?</p> <p>An answer was provided at the meeting and the webcast and minutes (when published) can be found here:</p> <p>Agenda for Council on Wednesday 4 October 2023, 2.00 pm Sheffield City Council</p>	Cllr Ben Miskell (Chair of Transport, Regeneration and Climate Policy Committee)
Lee Parkinson	<p>1. Councillors will be aware that GMB have launched an equal pay campaign in Sheffield. We note that the Deputy Leader has suggested women who think they may be being discriminated against ask for a regrade. Does the Council Leader believe it is the responsibility</p>	Cllr Tom Hunt (Leader of the Council & Chair of Strategy and

	<p>of individual women to resolve pay discrimination or the job of the Council leadership to ensure that Sheffield is operating a fair and transparent job evaluation scheme?</p> <p>2. When will the Leader commit to scrapping the rotten job allocation scheme that is discriminating against thousands of Sheffield women?</p> <p>Answers were provided at the meeting and the webcast and minutes (when published) can be found here:</p> <p>Agenda for Council on Wednesday 4 October 2023, 2.00 pm Sheffield City Council</p>	Resources Policy Committee)
Russell Johnson	<p>1. The Plaque</p> <p>The Town Hall plaque agreed by the Council celebrating the victory of Street Tree Campaigners is a small but significant part of SCC's demonstration of remorse for the wrongs they perpetrated and is thus of course welcome. However, the possible cost included in a Committee paper of around £10K seems preposterous, particularly in view of the parlous financial position even without being further damaged by possible equal pay costs.</p> <p>(a) What is the Council's procurement procedure for this item?</p> <p>(b) How is it progressing?</p> <p>(c) Would the Leader appreciate details of a suitable tailored plaque for £18.99 that I have located?</p> <p>(d) Will the Council commit to consultation on the proposed wording of the plaque with interested parties beyond the few people the CEx chose to speak to in the aftermath of Lowcock?</p> <p>2. The Fargate Container Scandal.</p> <p>The Internal Audit Report (Jan 2023 Policy Committee Report) concerning this was due by the first quarter this financial year.</p> <p>(a) When will this be available for the public?</p>	Cllr Tom Hunt (Leader of the Council & Chair of Strategy and Resources Policy Committee)

- (b) When it is published, are disciplinary actions against incompetent or inadequate Officers a possible or likely outcome? Is action against relevant Members for inadequate oversight a possibility? Will any appropriate sanctions that are applied be announced (anonymously of course)? If there appears to have been misfeasance will action be taken?
- (c) How likely is a clawback of the 'Get Building Fund' (DLUHC) of the approx. £0.5m wasted in this bizarre debacle? Has this been budgeted for?

3. Complaints

Following Lowcock, and the introduction of the MCS, the excited Sheffield public, myself included, expected to feel a breath of fresh air blowing through the foetid corridors of power at the Town Hall. One improvement promised was proper and timely dealing with complaints. Once again, the optimists' hopes are being dashed. For example, I am aware of a complaint against the Council outstanding from April 2021, and one from May 2023 that has not even been acknowledged. I also know of a Complaint regarding two Members' breaches of their Code of Conduct that dates from April of this year. The senior Officer supposedly dealing with this seems to be maintaining 'radio silence' in the SCC time-honoured fashion.

- (a) Would the Leader please explain the clear failings in this and other aspects of performance? Is he being distracted by schism in the Local Labour Party?
- (b) Would the Leader commit to addressing effectively the continuing dysfunction regarding complaints and speeding up FOIR responses?

4. The Rose Garden Café Fiasco

I welcome the possibilities for Community/Council joint working recently announced.

- (a) However, could the Leader explain why it has taken nineteen months to reach a possible solution that was clear many months ago?
- (b) Does the Leader agree with me that too often Elected Members fail to robustly question poor

	<p>advice from Officers, and this appears to have been the case with this unfortunate saga?</p> <p>(c) What is the explanation for the obviously ridiculous SCC costing of restoring the café to full use? Will there be any investigation of this apparent deception appearing to promote a particular and destructive agenda against the public interest?</p> <p>5. Personal Apologies arising out of Lowcock identified harms</p> <p>(a) Please would the Leader attempt to explain the increased rigidity demonstrated by the Council in refusing to accept victims' reasonable wishes in respect of apologies that were supposed to be 'personal'?</p> <p>(b) Does the Leader accept that the current 'doubling down' is not in the spirit of the remorse and desire for change embodied in the lengthy and remarkable public apology issued in June of this year by the CEx and himself?</p> <p>(c) Will he recommit to honesty, openness and a sensitive approach to the victims of Council behaviours?</p> <p><i>Answers were provided at the meeting and the webcast and minutes (when published) can be found here:</i></p> <p>Agenda for Council on Wednesday 4 October 2023, 2.00 pm Sheffield City Council</p>	
<p>Eileen Howarth <i>(not present to ask her question)</i></p>	<p>I am a very concerned member of Friends of Graves Park who has shown support to help save our well-loved Rose Garden cafe and been through the closure and all the setbacks and lack of progress over the last year due to Council delays. I ask this question of the Full Council.</p> <p>Is there a conflict of interest in all members of Charity Trustee Sub-Committee being councillors, and therefore having Council interests at heart rather than those of Graves Park Charity. Even after a petition was handed into Council of over 10,000 members of the public of Sheffield, there has been a year of nothing but negativity from Council Sub-Committees.</p>	

	<p>Answer: There is no conflict of interest. The Council's Constitutional Code of Conduct sets out when a conflict of interest will arise. This is where a Councillor or an immediate family member has a personal interest in the outcome of the decision. In the unlikely event that this would occur in relation to a decision as Trustee, a councillor would not take part in the decision, if they were a member of the Charity Sub Trustee Sub-committee. It is important to remember that the Council is the trustee and therefore, owing a duty to the Council is to act in the interest of the Charity as a trustee in those circumstances.</p> <p>Councillors regularly make decisions that impact on different parts of the Council's functions or, where they are operating a regulatory function. Councillors, and the officers who advise, are adept at understanding the framework within which they are making any particular decision. The situation of the Council being a corporate trustee is not unusual and occurs across the country in different local authorities.</p>	<p>Cllr Tom Hunt (Leader of the Council & Chair of Strategy and Resources Policy Committee)</p>
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