

Agenda Item 6

Council Meeting – 4th September 2024

Remaining Written Answers Provided To Members' Questions

(Published on 25 September 2024)

Questions of Councillor Rob Reiss to the Chair of the Finance and Performance Policy Committee (Councillor Zahira Naz)

Q.1 (a) In the last 12 months, how much Council Tax support funding has the Council received?

A.1 Council Tax Support (CTS) is not a ringfenced grant so we are unable to identify the amount of CTS grant the Council received from Central Government for 2023/24.

When the CTS grant was merged with the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) in 2013/14, the CTS amount was £47m and RSG was £143m, totalling £190m. The total Revenue Support Grant in 24/25 is £46m. The ongoing budget for CTS since 2013/14 has been supported by savings elsewhere in council budgets.

(b) How much of this funding has been allocated to Sheffield residents struggling to pay their Council tax?

A.1 As at 01/08/2024, Council Tax Support totalling £42m had been provided to Sheffield residents.

(c) How many pensioners have received Council tax support in the last 12 months?

A.1 As at 01/08/2024, 16,240 Pension Age households in Sheffield had been awarded Council Tax Support in this financial year.

Q.2 Since January 2024, how many empty properties by Council tax band (A to H) were there each month in Sheffield?

A.2 We do not record the level of empty properties on a month by month basis. However as at 30/8/2024 the number of empty and unfurnished domestic dwellings recorded on the Council Tax system was 5,216.

Of these 5,216 properties

- 3,669 are in Band A
- 819 are in Band B
- 463 are in Band C

- 144 are in Band D
- 62 are in Band E
- 31 are in Band F
- 24 are in Band G
- 4 are in Band H

Q.3 How many properties have been empty for:

(a) Up to two years?

A.3 4,190

(b) Between two and five years?

A.3 628

(c) Between five and ten years?

A.3 182

(d) More than ten years?

A.3 216

Q.4 How many properties in Sheffield are currently in Council Tax arrears?

A.4 A Council Tax account is classed as being in arrears if there is an outstanding balance on the account as of the 1st of April following the preceding financial year.

Arrears are reported as accounts rather than properties as there may be more than one account in arrears linked to an individual property. Equally a taxpayer may have arrears on a number of properties.

The number of accounts in arrears as at 31/03/2024 in respect of all years up to and including 2023/2024 was 114,094.

Q.5 What is the total value of Council Tax arrears in Sheffield?

A.5 The total value of outstanding Council Tax as at 31/03/2024 in relation to all years including 2023/24 was £98.4m.

The trajectory of the Council Tax arrears is that this figure has been increasing, and will continue to increase mainly as a result of the amount of income collected via Council tax is increasing each year. For example, in 2023/24, the Council issued bills worth an aggregate £326.7m. The Council collected £301.4m of this by year end (an in-year collection rate of 92.3%). This leaves 7.7% of the aggregate bill (£25.3m) uncollected at the end of

the year, but this will be collected and enforced alongside the new bills created in future years. This is very much business as usual – each and every financial year going back to 1999/00 has an amount of outstanding arrears at 31/3/24.

The £98.4m figure is then the accumulated arrears from every year from 1st April 1999 to 31/3/24. It should be borne in mind that, over this period, the Council has issued Council Tax bills in excess of £5bn – in that context, the debt outstanding for this period is less than 2% of the amount billed.

It seems logical, and is borne out by the available data, that the bigger authorities have the larger aggregate debtor balances. Sheffield is no outlier, in this regard – see below, for analysis of the Core Cities:

Authority	Figures in £	
	Arrears per Dwelling	Arrears per Head
<i>Core Cities</i>		
Birmingham	457	180
Bristol	246	107
Leeds	228	102
Liverpool	735	349
Manchester	427	183
Nottingham	301	133
Newcastle upon Tyne	81	36
Sheffield	379	172

Questions of Councillor Mohammed Mahroof to the Chair of the Finance and Performance Policy Committee (Councillor Zahira Naz)

Q.1 (a) How many consultants has the Council employed in the last four years?

A.1 161, based on number of unique suppliers coded to “consultancy costs” (per below)

(b) What was the cost of the consultants?

A.1 £31.9m

(a) + (b) Based on data held in the financial system, we have “Consultant Cost” expense codes for both revenue and capital spend. The information is based on the data held for these codes, there may be other peripheral spend that has not been coded correctly but it would be very difficult to identify without querying individual transactions.

	Revenue 8460-000		Capital 1193-000		Grand Total	Number of Suppliers 8460-000 1193-000	
23-24	£	4,269,991	£	6,543,365	£	10,813,355	69 22
22-23	£	2,174,099	£	5,768,875	£	7,942,974	61 22
21-22	£	1,618,922	£	5,917,935	£	7,536,857	41 19
20-21	£	1,180,510	£	4,415,726	£	5,596,236	38 18
	£	9,243,521	£	22,645,901	£	31,889,423	

Unique suppliers

115 46 161

It should be noted why the council has to use business consultants, who are external professional advisors that help us meet our goals and / or make operations more efficient. This could include providing specific technical advice, increased revenues, improved employee performance, create long-term plans and support changing technologies”.

SCC is using consultants to support major change within the organisation to deliver longer term financial sustainability and service improvements. It has not been possible to use existing staff due to capacity issues following years of employee reductions within support services to balance budgets. External consultants also provide professional expertise that might not be available within the organisations such as Councils, and vital are to successful implementation of change. One example would include IT expertise to update / change systems to deliver improved customer experiences and service efficiencies.

(c) Can this cost be broken down by service area?

Revenue	2021	2122	2223	2324	Grand Total	
ADULTS, CARE AND WELLBEING		£5	£42,264	£567	£1,140	£43,976
CENTRAL COSTS	£400,969		£53,531			£454,500
DIGITAL INNOVATION & ICT	£3,175			£8,050	£478,077	£489,302
ECONOMY, CULTURE & SKILLS			£51,902	£10,884		£62,786
FINANCE & COMMERCIAL SERVICES	£78,101		£0		£10,584	£88,685
GENERAL COUNSEL			£21,626	-£21,626		£0
HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT	£44,618		£1,700	£71,470	£49,582	£167,369
INTEGRATED COMMISSIONING	£3,800		£6,020	£2,910	£24,413	£37,143
OPERATIONAL SERVICES	£33,144		£142,793	£79,577	£97,732	£353,246
ORGANISATIONAL STRATEGYP&D				£5,725		£5,725
PARKS, LEISURE & LIBRARIES	£60,995		£146,618	£246,018	£192,590	£646,221
PEOPLE & CULTURE			£31,440	£34,634	£251,278	£317,352
PLANNING, INVESTMENT & SUSTAIN	£490,204		£728,761	£537,038	£679,935	£2,435,938
POLICY & DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT	£23,100		£18,375			£41,475
PUBLIC HEALTH			£31,856		£0	£31,856
REGENERATION AND	£42,399		£306,623	£1,152,467	£2,486,530	£3,988,019

DEVELOPMENT

STREETSCENE & REGULATION		£35,414	£46,382	-£1,870	£79,926
Grand Total	£1,180,510	£1,618,922	£2,174,099	£4,269,991	£9,243,521

Capital	2021	2122	2223	2324	Grand Total
CHILDREN & FAMILIES	£84,206	£67,490	£55,206	£13,706	£220,608
EDUCATION & SKILLS	£20,876	£414,321	£402,779	£241,227	£1,079,204
HOUSING GENERAL FUND		£26,600	£38,252	£3,504	£68,356
HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT	£59,098	£164,835	£215,926	£171,737	£611,595
OPERATIONAL SERVICES	£2,800	£108,193	£58,088	£613,701	£782,783
PARKS, LEISURE & LIBRARIES	£175,244	£47,795	£147,454	£30,050	£400,543
PLANNING, INVESTMENT & SUSTAIN	£636,661	£384,151	£270,307	£223,890	£1,515,009
REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT	£3,436,841	£4,694,163	£4,576,943	£5,224,270	£17,932,217
STREETSCENE & REGULATION		£10,386	£3,920	£21,280	£35,586
Grand Total	£4,415,726	£5,917,935	£5,768,875	£6,543,365	£22,645,901

(d) What has been the cost of employing agency staff in the last four years?

A.1 £76.2m

It needs to be understood why there is such a cost involved with employing agency staff, and if note is Adult and Children's Social care staff provision having been a challenge for numerous years as the sector has difficulty with the number of Social Workers coming through the qualification, qualified/experienced Social Workers leaving Local authorities to take up more lucrative employment opportunities via Agencies. Care workers are generally low paid so it's difficult to recruit which has been recognised as a national issue.

- Sheffield's employment rate continues to increase compared to previous years and is now sitting at 73.1%, with its unemployment rate continuing to fall, now sitting at 3.9% so less applicants available to recruit to SCC and a more competitive market. Sheffield's Economic inactivity is 24.7% which is expected to be higher than the national average with having two local universities
- Trades continue to be difficult to recruit to as most can demand higher pay in the private sector.
- Legal Services roles continue to be difficult to fill on a permanent SCC basis, but a restructure is underway to help alleviate this pressure.
- Specialist roles within IT are also proving difficult to recruit to.

You may be interested to know what further work the council to doing to drive down spends on agency staff:

- The current Resource Control Form that requires DLT sign off for all employees spend (inc Agency) is being automated, and will in future be

routed via HR to check that the requirement is being sourced appropriately and via Finance to ensure the budget is available.

- HR have a resourcing team in place that has recently started contacting key Agency hiring managers to challenge use of Agency staff and offer support/advice on how each staffing requirement can be appropriately met. Claire McDonagh is your contact for more detail regarding this work and the progress being made.
- HR agreed a cost saving proposal with RTS in August 2021 that is still in place, this includes the following which are still in place:
 - Cashable savings – generates £60k per annum
 - Overtime management – Reduces SCC manager use of overtime rates. This has seen a reduction in Agency overtime from 1244 hours in September 23 to 526 in August 24.
 - Day rate contractors – Move from hourly rate to day rate to reduce margins
 - Client supplied candidates – Reduction in Agency margin if candidates are sourced by SCC managers
 - Temp to perm recruitment – RTS now work actively with managers to avoid paying temp to perm fee's
- Working towards introducing the DfE Children's Agency Social Worker regulations that will be implemented between 31 October 2024 and 1 October 2025. This will impact in a number of ways including, regional pay caps, common Agency Social worker notice period of 4 weeks, no re-engagement of social workers via Agency within 3 months of leaving a permanent role in the same region, Councils should only use agency social workers with a minimum of three years' post-qualifying experience in direct employment of an English local authority in children's services and Councils should provide a detailed practice-based reference.

(e) Can this cost be broken down by service area?

Agency Spend	2021	2122	2223	2324	Grand Total
CHILDREN & FAMILIES	£5,309,553	£8,543,399	£5,024,897	£2,979,643	£21,857,493
OPERATIONAL SERVICES	£2,761,693	£3,229,200	£3,051,140	£4,030,947	£13,072,981
ADULTS, CARE AND WELLBEING	£1,029,681	£1,138,790	£2,560,222	£4,924,658	£9,653,351
HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT	£768,148	£1,331,649	£1,205,682	£1,278,648	£4,584,126
PEOPLE & CULTURE	£1,072,985	£1,477,630	£919,766	£1,041,844	£4,512,225
GENERAL COUNSEL	£546,260	£938,376	£947,559	£1,888,712	£4,320,907
PLANNING, INVESTMENT & SUSTAIN	£949,359	£599,353	£591,636	£1,039,990	£3,180,338
COMMUNITY SERVICES	£183,916	£1,608,546	£665,467	£587,578	£3,045,507
EDUCATION & SKILLS	£356,830	£726,147	£899,067	£1,058,816	£3,040,860
STREETSCENE & REGULATION	£288,864	£266,307	£330,700	£785,606	£1,671,476
DIGITAL INNOVATION & ICT	£684,283	£425,720	£153,334	£136,710	£1,400,047

FINANCE & COMMERCIAL SERVICES	£9,082	£174,202	£223,988	£861,566	£1,268,838
PARKS, LEISURE & LIBRARIES	£156,429	£166,252	£267,086	£451,320	£1,041,087
HOUSING GENERAL FUND	£63,943	£166,742	£357,638	£451,153	£1,039,477
POLICY & DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT	£136,712	£177,187	£246,907	£299,569	£860,376
REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT	£172,506	£204,747	£261,968	£198,942	£838,163
ECONOMY, CULTURE & SKILLS	£276,056	£32,484	£7,735	£24,220	£340,495
ORGANISATIONAL STRATEGY P & D	£21,458	£122,052	£752	£28,521	£172,782
INTEGRATED COMMISSIONING	£23,555	£11,322	£73,028	£30,551	£138,455
OTHER	£131,300				£131,300
BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT	£26,342	£10,991	-£3,106	£58,116	£92,342
CENTRAL COSTS	£16,319				£16,319
PUBLIC HEALTH		£7,320			£7,320
Grand Total	£14,985,274	£21,358,419	£17,785,462	£22,157,110	£76,286,266

Q.2 (a) How many people have been made redundant, voluntary or compulsory, in the last five years?.

A.1 374

(b) What was the total and average cost of these redundancies?

A.1 Total cost: £12.9m
Average cost: £34k

Please note the cost figures includes both the severance and pension strain cost.

	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	TOTAL
People Count	19	142	172	4	37	374
Total Cost	£660,269	£4,471,539	£6,112,404	£78,428	£1,551,861	£12,874,501
Average Cost	£34,751	£31,490	£35,537	£19,607	£41,942	£34,424

(c) How many of these redundancy packages were more than £50,000?

A.2 90

(d) How many of these redundancy packages were more than £100,000?

A.2 21

It is worth noting that protections around pension rights are the reason for costs over £100k. Individuals made redundant as part of the Council's need to deliver savings / efficiencies, and whom are over the age of 55, have a right to a full pension which results in an unavoidable cost for the Council. Of the total £2.8m paid out on these redundancies, £2.3m was paid to the local government pension fund (82%)

	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	TOTAL
£0 to £49k (Number)	13	114	126	3	28	284
£0 to £49k (Cost)	£87,016	£2,046,389	£2,264,951	£28,411	£525,727	£4,952,494
£0 to £49k (Average)	£6,694	£17,951	£17,976	£9,470	£18,776	£70,867
£50k to £99k (Number)	4	24	35	1	5	69
£50k to £99k (Cost)	£296,835	£1,874,135	£2,494,725	£50,017	£408,334	£5,124,046
£50k to £99k (Average)	£74,209	£78,089	£71,278	£50,017	£81,667	£355,260
>£100k (Number)	2	4	11	0	4	21
>£100k (Cost)	£276,419	£551,015	£1,352,728	-	£617,801	£2,797,963
>£100k (Average)	£138,209	£137,754	£122,975	-	£154,450	£553,388

Questions of Councillor Sophie Thornton to the Chair of the Finance and Performance Policy Committee (Councillor Zahira Naz)

Q.1 What was the value of the proposed savings identified in association with vacating the Moorfoot building?

A.1 £2.5m

Q.2 What was the original timescale agreed by the Council in vacating Moorfoot?

A.2 No specific timescale was agreed for the vacation of Moorfoot, however it was initially expected that the full saving associated with the vacation and disposal of the building would be delivered by the end of March 2024.

152 services have moved from Moorfoot to other Council buildings (Howden House, Town Hall, Central Library, Manor Lane, Solpro, Centre in the Park at Norfolk Park, Sharrow).

The full savings associated with the closure of Moorfoot will not be delivered until the building is disposed of. This is a complex piece of work requiring significant engagement with the market and with partners such as Homes England. The target date for disposal is end December 2026.

A decision was made to keep services in Moorfoot until disposal to reduce vacant property management costs and mitigate the risk of anti-social behaviour associated with a building standing empty. Having this occupation of the building does also mean our insurance costs are lower than if the building was empty, and it deters anti-social behaviour and vandalism too.

We are also in the process of looking at what is left in there, such as files and furniture, as the shutting-down of individual floors is underway. This work will continue over the coming months, and is tied into further work to identify savings. It's a big job and includes lots of links into the regeneration of our city centre, to develop Sheffield to be the kind of city we need for the future

The remaining building users have been consolidated onto three floors to save running costs. Current footfall at Moorfoot is 80 per day (for context, there were 2700 desks at Moorfoot pre pandemic).

Q.3 What is the current cost of the work to vacate the Moorfoot building?

A.3

2023/24	£262,608
2024/25 YTD	£30,037
TOTAL	£292,645.00

Questions of Councillor Marieanne Elliot to the Chair of the Finance and Performance Policy Committee (Councillor Zahira Naz)

Q. I previously asked Cllr Hunt as Chair of Strategy and Resources Policy Committee about advertising boards in February, in particular their placement in the middle of cycle routes, and he agreed that this is at odds with our ambitions around active travel. I welcomed his response and would like to know if any investigations have been done to move the panel obstructing the Sheaf Valley Cycle Route on Sheaf Street?

A. Officers have been looking into the issue of the advertising panel on Sheaf Street following this being raised as an issue. This panel has been in place since before the footpath was designated as a cycle route and the panel has the appropriate planning permission. However, it is acknowledged that the panel makes the cycle path less easy to use, and, following discussion with our advertising partners, it will be removed in the coming months.

Questions of Councillor Julie Grocutt to the Chair of the Finance and Performance Policy Committee (Councillor Zahira Naz)

Q.1 In the light of the worrying Q1 budget statement and the need to take urgent and effective action, can I ask when the performance figures will be produced?

A.1 The Performance Framework report for Q1 will be presented to the September meeting of the Finance and Performance Committee on 23 September.

Q.2 When will the move out of Moorfoot, which has taken 3 years so far, be completed?

A.2 The full savings associated with the closure of Moorfoot will not be delivered until the building is disposed of. This is a complex piece of work requiring significant engagement with the market and with partners such as Homes England. The target date for disposal is end December 2026.

Questions of Councillor Shaffaq Mohammed to the Chair of the Waste and Street Scene Policy Committee (Councillor Joe Otten)

Q.1 Since the introduction of the Arundel Bus Gate: -

(b) What is the highest number of PCNs issues to a single individual or organisation?

1,005 have been issued to one organisation. That party is a hire company with multiple vehicles.

Q.3 How many individual vehicles have paid the CAZ penalty fine?

A.3 36,518 individual vehicles have a CAZ penalty charge paid.

Q.4 What is the breakdown of these tickets by vehicle type? (i.e. bus, coach, taxi, private hire vehicles, HGVs, vans, minibuses)

A.4 The breakdown of CAZ tickets issued by vehicle type is

Vehicle Type	Issued PCNs
Bus/coach	2,334
HGV	6,746

Minibus	1,822
Taxi/PHV	11,191
Van	126,600

Data runs up to 23/08/2024

Vehicle Type	Count of Vehicle Type
Bus/coach	363
HGV	1,960
Minibus	417
Taxi/PHV	1,727
Van	32,051
Grand Total	36,518

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