

# SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

## Cabinet in the Community

### Session held 13 February 2014

**PRESENT:** Councillor Andrew Sangar, (Chair - South West Local Area Partnership)  
Councillor Julie Dore, (Leader of the Council)  
Councillor Isobel Bowler, (Cabinet Member for Culture, Sport and Leisure)  
Councillor Leigh Bramall, (Cabinet Member for Business, Skills and Development)  
Councillor Ben Curran, (Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources)  
Councillor Jackie Drayton, (Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families)  
Councillor Harry Harpham, (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Homes and Neighbourhoods)  
Councillor Mazher Iqbal, (Cabinet Member for Communities and Inclusion)  
Councillor Mary Lea, (Cabinet Member for Health, Care and Independent Living)  
Councillor Jack Scott, (Cabinet Member for Environment, Recycling and Streetscene)

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#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Councillor Andrew Sangar (Chair of the South West Local Area Partnership) welcomed people to the first Cabinet in the Community session that would offer the public the opportunity to ask questions of the Council's Cabinet Members. A similar session would be held in the six other Local Area Partnership areas.

#### **2. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

**Question 1** Wendy Marsden requested a bus shelter at the bottom of Vernon Terrace and was concerned for the elderly living in the nearby flats and children attending Ryegate Hospital.

**Answer 1** Councillor Leigh Bramall (Cabinet Member for Business Skills and Development) stated that the South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (SYLTE) dealt with bus shelter requests. Although there had been a freeze on the provision of new shelters, existing shelters could be relocated. Councillor Bramall agreed to forward the request to the SYLTE.

**Question 2** Angela Southward referred to the number of empty shops in Crosspool in the last few months and asked what the Council would do to encourage local businesses to stay in the area.

**Answer 2** Councillor Leigh Bramall referred to the Neighbourhood Fund that was used to revitalise District Centres. He also referred to the Parking Payback

Scheme being piloted in Broomhill and which provided a discount voucher with the parking ticket that could be used at participating retailers.

He also stated that Business Rates were set by the Government and collected by the Council with 50% retained by the Council. The revaluation of Business Rates scheduled for 2015 had been postponed to 2017 by the Government.

**Question 3** Terry Saunders stated that the Centre for Cities Report placed Sheffield 62nd out of 64 in the league table for job creation. He asked what was the Council doing to increase employment opportunities and whether it was business unfriendly. Mr Saunders also asked whether the City's poor performance in the education league tables was part of the problem. He also did not want any repeat of the issues relating to the Next development or dithering over the Ikea proposal.

**Answer 3** Councillor Leigh Bramall stated that the rankings in the Centre for Cities Study had been misreported in relation to Sheffield. For example, it was the number of private sector jobs lost not the percentage of jobs lost. In terms of the other indicators, Sheffield compared well with some other cities. The Council was friendly in terms of encouraging local business.

Councillor Bramall also highlighted a number of initiatives for small and medium sized businesses, including a Loan Fund, an Export Pilot Project and the Rise Graduate Recruitment Scheme.

In terms of the Ikea development, he stated that the Council was not dithering. The Government body, the Highways Agency, had a longstanding objection to the planning application which had only recently been withdrawn. There were significant congestion needs to address and the Council was working positively with Ikea. It was intended that the planning application for the Ikea development would be considered by the Planning Committee shortly.

Councillor Jackie Drayton (Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families) stated that in terms of attainment, Sheffield was doing well in some areas but there were concerns on others. The gap was widening at the Foundation Stage, particularly in areas of deprivation, and work was taking place to address this.

Good work was taking place on skills. The City Wide Learning body was helping and supporting all the organisations involved in improving attainment. A curriculum had been developed to equip young people to meet the needs of employers. Mentoring was available through the Made in Sheffield curriculum. There was also a pre-apprenticeship programme for the most vulnerable young people.

It was one of the City's big ambitions that every child, young person and family achieved their full potential by raising expectations, attainment and enabling enriching experiences. Our aim is for every school to be a great

school but we recognise that the City Council cannot do this on their own, it must be done in partnership with schools, staff, governors, children, young people and families, businesses, other agencies and the voluntary, community and faith sector.

**Question 4** A member of the public asked whether the work with schools referred to in the response to question 3 was in any particular area of the City and how the Council engaged with areas that needed assistance.

Answer 4 Councillor Jackie Drayton (Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families) stated that all schools need to be achieving more. She added that some schools were coasting and others were doing just enough. Last year, the Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive and the Executive Director Children, Young People and Families had met with all secondary school head teachers and asked them what was the reason for schools not achieving more and what could the Council do to assist them. There was still work to do but the Council's role was as an advocate for children, young people and families and would do all they can to ensure all young people to achieved their potential.

**Question 5** Kathy Whitaker referred to the savings of £1.6m over two years for the Libraries Service and the additional funding of £262,000 a year and asked for details of the proposed level of savings.

**Question 6** A member of the public asked what reassurance could the Cabinet give for a change in library finance/backing next year and the year after. She asked where do families and children who want to meet and read and learn together go if they cannot reach Ecclesall, Hillsborough or the City Centre. She also asked why were some areas being treated differently.

**Question 7** A member of the public referred to the proposals for the Library service to save £1.6m that included 11 hubs and 18 independent libraries. She considered that the having the hubs in certain areas would disenfranchise people. It would take her over an hour to get to a library. She referred to the petition containing 21,000 signatures that was submitted to the Council Meeting on 8 January 2014 that highlighted communities' concerns and that they wanted libraries. It would be a good idea to review the library strategy and share resources across the 27 libraries. The Cabinet report was similar to the review proposals.

She considered that the Council had been disrespectful in relation to the communities' commitment to work with the Council and be creative and try and keep libraries open. The Council was at risk of not providing an efficient library service as required by the 1964 Act. Also access had been provided to electronic resources but these would only be available through libraries. She asked that the Council was creative in addressing the communities' response.

**Question 8** A member of the public asked if the libraries would be supported through a form of independence.

Answers  
5-8

In response to questions on the Review of the Library Service, Councillor Mazher Iqbal (Cabinet Member for Communities and Inclusion) referred to the Government funding cuts over the last 4 years and that the Council had been informed last June of further cuts. It had been made clear that the review of the Library service was due to the financial crisis that the Council was facing. No service, except child safeguarding, had been spared from budget reductions. People valued the Library service but recognised the situation the Council faced.

Councillor Iqbal outlined the background to the review of the Libraries Service that began in 2011. This was followed by a consultation survey in 2012. In 2013, a prospectus was issued inviting further ideas and suggestions and offers of support and 27 organisations responded. Details of 13 different operating models were available on the Council's website. The Council wanted to keep as many libraries open as possible. Last year the proposals for the Library service were published and 7000 responses were received. Councillor Iqbal and his Cabinet Advisor Councillor Geoff Smith had met a number of groups around the city.

The Council had to provide the most efficient library service but the Act did not set out criteria on how this should be provided. As part of the review process, there had been an examination of the Judicial Review of the library review in Brent and also of case law. The demography and geography of the City had also been considered. The Needs Assessment had also been published as part of the Cabinet report.

A saving of £1.68m was required but other service areas had to make reductions, such as Adult Social Care that had to make a savings of £28m.

Councillor Iqbal outlined the proposals in the report that would be considered by the Cabinet on 19 February and at the Economic and Environmental Wellbeing Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee on 18 February 2014. The saving of £1.68m had still to be made but additional resources of £262,000 were available.

Councillor Iqbal referred to the Stocksbridge Leisure Centre that was now community run. It was important to work with communities to retain what remained as a result of the budget cuts.

Councillor Mary Lea (Cabinet Member for Health, Care and Independent Living) indicated that the additional funding of £262,000 was from next year's £31m Public Health Grant and it was important to recognise the health and wellbeing aspect.

**Question 9** Terence Howard submitted the following questions in advance and received a written response from the Cabinet Member.

**Question 9a** Bin collections. Via the "Your Collection Calendar" - VEOLIA - Residents

are asked not to place bins in the middle of footpaths, preferably against the property boundary. When bins are emptied they are again placed against the property boundary by the bin men not in the middle of the footpath.

**Answer 9a** Councillor Jack Scott (Cabinet Member for Environment, Recycling and Streetscene) replied that Veolia instructions to their collection crews are to orderly place bins back on the kerbside after collection, to minimise obstruction to users of footpaths etc.

**Question 9b** Where work is being carried out by Utility companies and AMEY across footpaths, suitable pedestrian provision is made for safe and easy ways past the works, not simply directing pedestrians across the road to use the footpath opposite or ignoring them altogether. On occasions, busy roads have to be crossed then recrossed or walking into the road where parked cars add to the difficulty.

**Answer 9b** Councillor Jack Scott (Cabinet Member for Environment, Recycling and Streetscene) replied that all of the works carried out on behalf of the Council are carried out using the Safety at Street works guidelines. Where it is possible to keep a sufficient width of footpath open, we will do so. However, due to the nature and size of the excavations required to carry out jointing and amendments to the underground cable infrastructure for street lighting installations, this is not always possible.

Where a footpath needs to be closed, we aim to ensure that an alternative safe walking route is maintained. This may be by the provision of guarded temporary walkways in the carriageway on the same side of the road as the footway works, or where this is not possible, by diverting people to the footpath on the opposite side of the road.

**Question 9c** Where building work is carried out on adjacent properties to the footpath, it is often used for storing materials and used as a working space without due regard to pedestrians. If such work is carried out under planning consent it should include the proviso that no public footpaths will be blocked.

**Answer 9c** Councillor Jack Scott (Cabinet Member for Environment, Recycling and Streetscene) replied that the Highway Authority (Highway Network Management) has legal powers to allow builders to either temporarily store building materials on the Highway or to work from it. Decisions in respect of this are not taken lightly and if the materials can be stored within the site, or the work carried out safely from the site, then we insist that the footways and carriageways are kept clear.

Due to the interface between Public Highway and a building site this is not always possible. If this is not possible for practical or safety reasons then we may allow a footway to be temporarily closed. Again, this decision is taken seriously and is only given where pedestrian safety is compromised by the nature and extent of the work.

There may be occasions when a delivery of materials is being made to a confined building site and pallets of bricks or blocks are temporarily placed onto a footway without the Authority's knowledge or input. However, this is usually very short term, until the workmen carry the materials into the site.

It should be noted that there are builders who take it upon themselves to block footways with materials for longer periods without contacting the Authority. In these cases we sometimes receive enquiries from members of the Public, drawing our attention to the problem, thus enabling us to investigate and deal with the builder concerned. Ideally, we would never have to allow footways to be blocked for building works but for the above reasons this is not always possible.

**Question 9d** Other work not covered by Planning Consent, such as simple building work or landscaping, may need enforcement so that footpaths are not blocked for pedestrian use.

Answer 9d Councillor Jack Scott (Cabinet Member for Environment, Recycling and Streetscene) replied that this really falls much into the same category as 9c above. It is worth adding that Highway Network Management do carry out enforcement.

**Question 9e** Vehicle parking on footpaths and grass verges is increasingly getting worse. Much damage is being done apart from creating a hazard for pedestrians. Again this may be an enforcement issue

Answer 9e Councillor Jack Scott (Cabinet Member for Environment, Recycling and Streetscene) replied that from a Highway Enforcement view we have no legal powers regarding verge damage. In the 1960's there used to be a by-law which allowed the enforcement of verge parking on a City wide basis. When the South Yorkshire Act was introduced in the early 70's the by-law was removed and never re-introduced. The general issue of verge damage is currently dealt with through the Streets Ahead contract.

Actions in relation to existing verge damage will be considered as part of the zonal approach when the Streets Ahead project undertakes works on an area by area basis across the City over the next 4 years. In the meantime, if you consider the verge to be dangerous then the details will be passed to our contractor, Amey, to enable them to undertake make safe repairs.

**Question 9f** Overgrown hedges over footpaths, again an enforcement issue.

Answer 9f Councillor Jack Scott (Cabinet Member for Environment, Recycling and Streetscene) replied that Highway Network Management deal with the enforcement of trees, hedges or shrubs grow from private land and obstruct the footway. There are currently 2 Highway Enforcement Officers covering the City so we often rely on public complaints to identify problem

areas. If anyone wishes to report a specific location where the footway is impassable or substantially overgrown by vegetation growing from private land then they can contact us on 0114 2736677 or e-mail [Highways@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:Highways@sheffield.gov.uk). An officer will then investigate and follow the legal process with the property owner or occupier to ensure that the footway is cleared.

**Question 9g** Mud and leaves on footpaths. Although AMEY has done much leaf clearing there are still some footpaths where leaves have been left and these have become a "mud" and is a hazard for pedestrians.

Answer 9g Councillor Jack Scott (Cabinet Member for Environment, Recycling and Streetscene) replied that as is acknowledged in the question, an enormous amount of work has taken place to remove fallen leaves. However, if you contact the Council's Customer Services on 0114 2734567 and provide details of the locations of the footpaths where the problems have arisen, we will ensure that the area is re-cleared.

**Question 10** Chris Batchelor submitted a written question and asked what Sheffield was doing to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill and increase recycling.

Answer 10 Councillor Jack Scott (Cabinet Member for Environment, Recycling and Streetscene) provided the following written response:

Sheffield is committed to reducing waste to landfill and increasing the amount of waste we recycle. Over the past two years we have significantly reduced the amount of waste we send to landfill and our performance at less than 4% is amongst the best in the country. The amount of waste we recycle is continuing to grow, albeit that ending the funding for garden waste collections, due to massive financial cuts by central government, has meant we now send less waste for composting but this performance has improved over the past 12 months.

We are in the process of revising our Waste Strategy having consulted our customers at the back end last year. A key part of our revision will be to address how we can keep momentum in increasing the amount of waste we recycle and divert from landfill.

**Question 11** June Shaw referred to gardens that are taken up by concrete etc. for parking. She asked that, in view of the lack of drainage, should there be a percentage that is only allowed to be used for car parking or should materials only be used that allowed water to drain through.

Answer 11 Councillor Leigh Bramall (Cabinet Member for Business Skills and Development) indicated that the issues relating to hard standings were a planning matter. Where people built an extension, Yorkshire Water did not permit drains across the front of the property.

**Question 12** Alison Thorpe submitted a written question and asked the Cabinet if a surfaced footpath could be constructed along Fulwood Lane from the Porter Clough car park to the 30 mph sign in Ringinglow Village (approximately a quarter of a mile). Fulwood Lane now formed part of Sheffield's unofficial outer ring road and despite being very narrow - in places only about 5.5 metres wide - and having a speed limit of 60mph, is very heavily used by vehicles (including HGVs) circumnavigating Sheffield City centre, making it a dangerous place for the many other road users, which, as there is no proper footpath, includes pedestrians. It is important to note that this route also forms part of the Sheffield Round Walk which is managed and maintained by Sheffield City Council. As such, this route is used regularly by many walkers following the directions given by the Council, but who in fact, risk their personal safety on this part of the walk because of the lack of a suitable footpath.

Currently there is an extremely muddy and, in places, frequently submerged "ditch" running along the right hand side of Fulwood Lane, heading towards Porter Clough car park. If this could be surfaced in a similar way to the footpath running down Ringinglow Road, from Ringinglow Village to Common Lane, it would make this short section of the Round Walk much safer for pedestrians using this stretch of Fulwood Lane en route to or from the Porter Valley.

She also asked when the Streets Ahead team would be in the area.

**Answer 12** Councillor Jack Scott (Cabinet Member for Environment, Recycling and Streetscene) stated that requests for footpaths were assessed. Six months before Streets Ahead were due in an area all the requests were considered with as many funded as possible. Hundreds of requests were received across the City and funding was limited. He would forward the request for Fulwood Lane to officers.

He understood that the area was in the Streets Ahead programme for 2015 but would confirm this in writing to Alison Thorpe.

**Question 13** Judi Sutherland asked how the Council justified their stance against Ikea coming to Sheffield.

**Answer 13** Councillor Leigh Bramall (Cabinet Member for Business Skills and Development) stated that the Council was not against Ikea and welcomed the development. The Highways Agency had an objection to the planning application but this had now been withdrawn. There had also been an objection from British Land. It was expected that the application would be considered by the Planning and Highways Committee in April 2014.

**Question 14** Robert Jackson asked what was being done to chase the Council's bad debts and how large was the amount owed to the Council by businesses and individuals



**Answer 14** In response, Councillor Ben Curran (Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources) indicated that the Council had arrears of £30m and this was in line with other Core Cities. 96% of arrears were collected and this rose to 99% at times during the year. In seeking repayment, a balanced view was taken, including the ability to pay. In some cases an agreement was reached for repayment over a longer period. The Council had a less liberal debt write-off process than other local authorities.

**Question 15** A member of the public referred to the successful initiatives with the Tenants' and Residents' Associations to improve the non-collection rate, including a scheme in Southey.

**Answer 15** In response, Councillor Ben Curran (Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources) highlighted the pilot schemes in Foxhill and Gleadless Valley on reducing the amount of outstanding debts and the early signs were that the schemes were working well. If successful, the schemes could be rolled out to other areas of the City.

**Question 16** A member of the public asked how the proposed budget cuts would affect Adult Social Care.

**Answer 16** In response, Councillor Mary Lea (Cabinet Member for Health, Care and Independent Living) indicated that there was a proposed £28m saving for Adult Social Care for 2014/15. In previous years this area had been protected but next year it would be subject to budget reductions and people would see the impact.

Personalisation would continue with people receiving a personal budget and choosing a personal plan. It would be necessary to consider providing services differently across all providers. Consideration would be given to the configuration of residential care. There was close working with the health service. Work was also taking place to address the £15-20m of benefits that were unclaimed in Sheffield

Work was taking place with the Clinical Commissioning Group on pooling budgets and obtaining value for money. The new Care Bill would mean that everyone needing care would require assessment by the Council.

**Question 17** A member of the public referred to certain individuals meeting on Hagg Lane and Stephen Hill close to where children played. There were a large number of vehicles and individuals meeting at this location. It did not make the area safe. There was also the potential for burglaries. No one appeared to be bothered about what was happening

**Answer 17** Councillor Julie Dore (Leader of the Council) responded by indicating that people could meet if it was not causing a nuisance, was safe and appropriate. She would ask Community Safety officers to investigate the issue raised.

Councillor Harry Harpham (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for

Homes and Neighbourhoods) asked the member of the public to provide him with further details at the end of the session and he would consider what action could be taken.

Councillor Leigh Bramall (Cabinet Member for Business Skills and Development) indicated that the police had been undertaking patrols.

Councillor Jack Scott Cabinet Member for Environment, Recycling and Streetscene) commented that Council officers working in the area of the allotments were wearing high visibility jackets.

**Question 18** Mr Kewley asked what was happening at a local level. He had attended a meeting on Local Area Partnerships in the Town Hall and had seen a model that involved local meetings in each Ward. However, there had not been a local meeting in Dore and Totley.

**Answer 18** In response, Councillor Mazher Iqbal (Cabinet Member for Communities and Inclusion) stated that as part of this year's budget savings, there had been a reduction of £2.5m for Community Assemblies with £500,000 available for locality working. Community Assemblies had been bureaucratic and rather than having large meetings there would be working at a Ward level. Each Ward of three councillors would have a small funding pot that would allow local councillors to hold 3 or 4 events a year, such as the event held at Totley Library. It would be for local councillors to organise those events. Councillors could also be contacted via their surgeries, post, phone or email.

The South West Local Area Partnership would hold a regular monthly meeting with partners and would identify 2/3 priorities.

(Councillor Andrew Sangar left the meeting at this point and Councillor Julie Dore chaired the remainder of the session)

**Question 19** A member of the public commented that way the Library Review had been portrayed was that the Council had no choice and had to make the cuts. The Council could ringfence the library budget and make savings from other larger budgets.

**Answer 19** In response, Councillor Julie Dore (Leader of the Council) stated that the Council had a £1.4bn turnover with the majority passported out to schools/Housing Revenue Account etc. In 2010, the Council had £600m of that amount as a discretionary budget. There were statutory requirements, for example on Adult Social Care, highways, waste management etc. and culture and leisure and museums were funded. The £600m would be reduced to £300m by the end of current term of Parliament.

The Council did have choices. There were vulnerable people and meeting their needs would leave little of the £300m. By the end of 2016/17 and 2017/18, the only available money would be to provide basic care. There were difficult choices and it was not possible to protect every service.

**Question 20** A member of the public stated that communities were being disenfranchised by the proposals for the library service and asked that resources were shared across the City.

**Answer 20** In response, Councillor Mazher Iqbal (Cabinet Member for Communities and Inclusion) referred to the proposals for 11 hubs and also that the hours had been equalised to 31 across the City. The Council has gone out and listened to communities. It was working with communities and trying to retain what it could of the service. If the Council did not set a legal budget the Secretary of State could step in and set his priorities.

Councillor Julie Dore (Leader of the Council) referred to the cuts of 27% to local government. Across the country the calculation and distribution of the cuts was unfair. Sheffield was taking a greater burden than other areas such as Richmond and Wokingham. The other Core Cities had the same view. She referred to a cross party visit of politicians from Birmingham to Downing Street to meet Ministers and state that the cuts were unacceptable. This approach had not been possible in Sheffield.

Councillor Dore commented that 95% of funding went to London rather than the north. This was clearly demonstrated by the Government stating that money was no object in response to the recent flooding. Whereas Sheffield had to pay some of the costs of the previous flooding in the City. Councillor Dore suggested that people made representations to their MP in relation to the budget cuts.

**Question 21** A member of the public stated that the proposal for libraries would add to the disadvantage.

**Question 22** A member of the public was not convinced that libraries could not be saved.

**Answers 21 and 22** Councillor Julie Dore (Leader of the Council) commented that the Council could demonstrate that it was providing a universal library service. With the funding available, the Council could only afford 11 hubs.

**Question 23** Mr Jackson commented that he did want to lose libraries. He considered that the Council had tried to be fair. However, everyone had to tighten their belts and it was not just affecting libraries.

**Question 24** A member of the public asked what advice could the Council give community groups and Tenants' and Residents' Associations that were protecting communities and whether they would receive the support they needed.

**Answer 24** Councillor Mary Lea (Cabinet Member for Health, Care and Independent Living) referred to the £28m cut in the Adult Social Care budget whilst ensuring that all those with eligible needs received those needs. There would be preventive work across the city to help people focusing more on

prevention. An example of how we can help people in a general way is the Safe Places Scheme for people with learning disabilities which is run by Heeley City Farm where city centre shops offer a safe space to people if they are having any problems whilst they are in the city. We are looking at how this scheme could be extended to other vulnerable groups such as people with dementia and mental health problems. We are also looking at how we can help people claim the benefits they are entitled to.

We are happy to work with any community group on local issues relating to care.

Councillor Julie Dore (Leader of the Council) explained that she did go to London to state the Council's case. There was close working with the Government via the Core Cities. There was work at a City wide strategic level on devolution. The aim was to keep more of the money raised locally and grow our economy. She referred to a range of meetings held with Government Ministers. There was also learning from other cities. There were partnerships with business to protect quality public services.. If there was a better Government settlement it would be spent on public services and seek to build it back up in libraries.

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Councillor Dore thanked everyone for attending the first Cabinet in the Community session and indicated that Cabinet Members would consider the points raised.