

SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

Cabinet in the Community

Meeting held 10 April 2014

PRESENT: Councillor Peter Price (Chair – North East Local Area Partnership)
Councillor Julie Dore (Leader of the Council)
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 Peter Price, Chair of the North East Local Area Partnership, welcomed members of the public to the fifth Cabinet in the Community session. Similar sessions had taken place in other areas of the City. He then invited members of the public to put questions to the Cabinet Members in attendance.

2. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Question 1 Richard Westaway had submitted a question in advance concerning the Streets Ahead programme. He made reference to the intention to resurface a section of Rutland Road, part of the route for the Tour de France. He asked specifically what work was intended beyond resurfacing. He stated that there was a longstanding issue of poor surface water drainage which arises from a combination of poorly sited and also permanently blocked gullies. Whilst he had previously raised this issue over a number of years including in the past with Councillor Steve Jones, and also Mr Hetherington formerly of Streetforce, he believed there had not been any effective resolution. He made reference to gully outside 287 Rutland Road which had not functioned correctly for a considerable time.

Answer 1 Councillor Jack Scott, the Cabinet Member for Environment, Recycling and Streetscene, had produced a written response, which stated that with regards to the road resurfacing on Rutland Road on the Tour De France Route, he could confirm that the work carried out will be from Pitsmoor Road to the Wood Fold Road/Cookwood Road junction (inclusive).

This work will involve full reconstruction of the carriageway surface with a 200mm inlay. This is due to be completed between the 22 April 2014 and 30 April 2014. Signs will be erected 5 days in advance of any road closure and any changes to programme will be communicated via these signs.

The drainage team will also ensure that the gully outside 297 is inspected and any works identified will be carried out in line with the resurfacing works.

As part of this work, all ironwork and gully boxes will be inspected and will be re-aligned or replaced where required. It is hoped that these works will adjust the camber of the road sufficiently to allow the gully outside 287 Rutland Road to work effectively. Once resurfacing works have been completed, the drainage team will carry out a further inspection to ensure that the works have successfully addressed any issues with this gully.

Councillor Scott stated that patching the road surface was not sufficient and a longer term resurfacing solution was needed and this would happen as part of the Streets Ahead investment works, whereby the highway in each particular zone was dealt with as a whole. There was also a commitment to keep on top of the repair of potholes which appeared. Whilst it was acknowledged that people resident in an area might be inconvenienced while work was happening in their area, the benefits of the core investment work were worthwhile. In addition, Streets Ahead employed approximately 1,200 people.

Question 2 A question was submitted in writing by Paul Antcliffe concerning allotment concessions.

Answer 2 Councillor Jack Scott had responded in writing that this issue had been reviewed, having been brought to the Council's attention. It had been decided that Medical Exemption Certificates should fall within the Council's definition of "disability" and, as a result, people in receipt of a Medical Exemption Certificate will now be eligible for a 75% discount on their allotment rents.

This means that people in receipt of a Medical Exemption Certificate will pay less for their allotments this year than they did last year, as will people on benefits, people who have used food banks or people who have a disability. To pay for these lower prices, the Council was asking people who were better off to make more of a contribution, which was often approximately 35 pence extra per week.

Question 3 Betty Gray had submitted a question in writing which asked why people have such a terrible public transport service for this area. At the moment, the only bus directly to the City Centre is the Number 2, which only runs every hour. The other buses 35 and 38 go to the city centre via Wincobank and Meadowhall which takes far too long. As she lived on a main road (Herries Road), she was appalled at the service. Residents in

this area have petitioned in the past about this but to no avail.

Answer 3 Councillor Julie Dore, the Leader of the Council, stated that a written answer had been provided as follows: South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive fund Service Number 2 and P1/P2 during the day as well as already funding the evening service on the 38. Unfortunately, due to a finite budget they are not able to provide additional funding for Service Number 2 to operate in an evening and Sunday. Services 83 and 20A are within the approved walking criteria of 800 metres for the majority of passengers. Unfortunately for those unable to walk this distance to alternative services, they will have to continue to use Service 38, which is already funded by the PTE in an evening and Sunday.

From Monday 28th April, First Bus will operate Service 38 beyond Hillsborough to the city centre, providing a direct link to the city centre via Hillsborough. For those passengers travelling after half past eight in an evening, they can continue to use Service 38 but will have to change buses at either Hillsborough or Firth Park.

Councillor Dore added that the City Council was not responsible for bus services, which had been privatised for some time and run for commercial profit. Where a route was not profitable, the bus companies would not be expected to operate a service. However, in some circumstances and where there was an unmet need, the Council would subsidise a route to enable a bus service to be provided.

In context, the Council will have received a fifty percent reduction in Government funding during this Parliament (down from £600 million to £300 million) and this reduction affected the amount of money which the Council was able to use to fund subsidised bus services. By 2017/18, the Council had been told that the Government was considering making more cuts to public services and if this was the case, it would become increasingly difficult to fund services.

Question 4 Ian Stokes had submitted a written question in advance of the meeting. He asked, what plans were in progress to ensure all new built Sheffield housing (N. East Area) stock is capable of maximising Autonomous Energy Efficiency; and what plans does Sheffield City Council have to build a strategy for energy efficiency upgrades of current Sheffield City Council owned housing stock?

Answer 4 A written answer was provided by Councillor Jack Scott, which stated that Sheffield City Council has given high priority to energy efficiency works on council housing stock since the 1990s and this has resulted in significant improvement to the SAP (energy efficiency) rating of the housing stock. This includes large scale cavity wall and loft insulation programmes which continued throughout the Decent Homes programme. Programmes of external insulation work have been completed to the majority of poor performing non-traditional/solid walled stock including tower blocks and maisonettes. The Council has been delivering a programme to replace

approximately 19,000 obsolete old inefficient gas boilers with 'A' rated systems since 2008 and this will continue for the next 4 years. An assessment of the heating in all Sheltered Schemes was undertaken and new efficient boiler systems have been fitted where this was found to be old and inefficient. Properties that receive their heat from the community heating network have benefitted through controls being fitted to individual properties and new boiler plant has been installed at the majority of locations. At Low Edges, a ground source heat pump has been installed.

The currently approved 5 year investment programme for Council Housing has an emphasis on continued improvement of energy efficiency and focuses on completing any remaining cavity/loft insulations, completing the programme to upgrade obsolete heating and upgrading the community heating network which includes distribution pipework and providing individually metered systems. A plan is being developed to improve the energy efficiency of non-traditional stock which Members will be asked to consider in the next few months.

The Asset Management Team within the Council Housing Service are looking at the possibility of providing Photovoltaics (PV) to council housing through the future roofing programme if appropriate external funding can be found. We are working with other Council departments to ensure we are able to respond positively to current and future Government priorities and initiatives which may allow further enhancement to the housing stock which are not already being addressed through the current Investment programme.

Question 5 A written question was submitted in advance of the meeting and asked by Lynne, on behalf of Shirecliffe Forum, as follows:

When do these cost cutting exercise stop and when does someone say enough is enough, and vulnerable pensioners cannot lose any more services?

She said that both her parents lived with her for health reasons. It was far from easy, but it was their choice. She said she will continue to do the best for her parents, but what concerned her was the other old age pensioners who have no one to fight their corner.

Answer 5 A written answer was provided by Councillor Mary Lea, the Cabinet Member for Health, Care and Independent Living, which stated that Sheffield City Council remains committed to ensuring that people continue to receive the right kind of services they need in the most cost effective way. Central Government funding reductions have meant that the City Council has had to review how it provides all its services including how it provides in-house home care services to determine how best services might be provided in the future.

Although there has been a decline in the demand for services over a number of years, the Council currently provide services to 187 people

through the Complex Needs Service. Analysis of the social care market tells us that we can continue to meet people's eligible social care need through independent sector providers at a lower cost whilst still maintaining the standard and quality the City Council requires.

It was understood that any change can be unsettling for people and the intention is to ensure that a smooth transition to new providers happens, working with people individually, along with their family carers and relatives, where appropriate. We will also be working closely with new providers to ensure that transition arrangements are actively managed.

Question 6 Mike Barnfield had submitted a question in advance of the meeting, which stated that the Don Valley Stadium is being demolished, libraries are threatened with closure and our services are being slashed. He said that, at the same time, a new school is being built in Fir Vale to accommodate children arriving from Slovakia and he asked, is this fair?

Mr Barnfield also asked a supplementary question at the meeting: is this fair?

Answer 6 A written answer was provided by Councillor Jackie Drayton, the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families, which stated that the Council has a legal duty to provide enough school places for the number of pupils living in Sheffield. Since 2001 there had been a 24% increase in the number of births to families living in Sheffield and this reflects a national trend. The increase in births is by far the largest factor in the extra school places that are required in a local area, alongside other factors such as migration and new housing developments. In the last few years the Council has created nearly 3,500 extra primary places across the City to meet the rise in population and this includes 420 places at the new primary school that is opening in Fir Vale, as well as a new school in Shirecliffe. The Council receives an annual allocation of capital funding from the government specifically for school places, based on the Council's estimate of demand, and this has provided the funding for the new school in Fir Vale.

In response to Mr Barnfield's supplementary question, Councillor Drayton stated that the Council has a legal duty to provide enough school places for children, and on those grounds, the decision to open a new school in Fir Vale was fair. Across the UK, there had been a rise in the birth rate and it was fair that every child has a school place and she wanted every child to achieve to their best potential.

Councillor Julie Dore stated that funding to provide school places was ring-fenced. Whereas, other services were funded through the Council's budget, which had been cut by half and there was no longer enough money available to provide all of these services. She did not think that the allocation of funding from the Government was fair. Taxes which are raised from people locally were collected and redistributed by the Government. The Council was clearly saying that the formula which the

Government used to distribute funding was not fair. Some funding was then ring-fenced, so the Council had little control as to how funding which it received was spent.

Councillor Drayton added that the School in Fir Vale was not being built to accommodate pupils from any one community, but to accommodate all pupils in response to the increased birthrate. The situation at present was that some children of primary age from the same family had to attend different primary schools. The 2 new schools will help address this difficult situation faced by families. There was also a new school being built at Shirecliffe.

Question 7 Graham Elliot submitted the following question in advance of the meeting:

Why does the Council believe Sheffield has become a magnet for economic migrants from Slovakia? Do you think it benefits the people of Sheffield, and if not what is the Council doing to deter it.

Answer 7 A written answer was provided by Councillor Julie Dore as follows:

It is true that the numbers from across Europe coming to work in Sheffield have risen and fallen over time. For example, based on National Insurance registrations figures for 2012 there were around 400 adults from Slovakia in 2012, 288 from Poland and 110 from Hungary.

The benefits to Sheffield of economic arrivals is a complex picture. However, it is fair to say that Sheffield is a destination of choice for many and new arrivals contribute much to the local economy particularly in the University, Hospital and the Health and Social Care sectors.

In many ways, the City has welcomed and benefited from new arrivals for many years. This can be seen in the richness and vibrancy of our City.

In terms of arrivals from Slovakia, I do not see Sheffield as being any more or less of a magnet than other Cities and Towns across the region.

However, we do expect people who arrive in Sheffield from other countries to make a positive contribution. To this end, for some newly arrived communities we will make additional information and support available to them. For example, if they are students studying at our Universities we will make them aware of how to keep themselves safe. For others, if their first language isn't English, we may translate some information so they can access the services they are entitled to and in some cases Job Centre Plus may help with language skills so they can access employment.

However, in terms of workers arriving from Europe, we do not directly have the power or right to deter people from seeking work in the Region or in Sheffield. However, if we find out that people are taking advantage of their right to be here, we will work with our partners to either take the

appropriate action or seek changes in behaviour.

Question 8 Mick Daniels asked a question concerning consultation with tenants. He said that the Council had said that it would listen to tenants and that there would be consultation at the city-wide or tenant participation group. He asked why the Council had gone against the results of the Federation Board meeting, at which all 61 TARAs were invited and 15 attended, and at which it was decided not to support the use of HRA money.

He asked if the Council could speak with tenants with regard to these issues and pointed out that there were over 60 estates in the City with no representation.

Mick Daniels also asked about the future of TARAs and whether the community engagement teams would be able to help support them and what their role would be.

Answer 8 Councillor Harry Harpham, the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet member for Homes and Neighbourhoods, stated that the Federation was not yet formally established, although discussions were being held as to how the Council could help to establish an independent Federation. A number of tenants associations had said they would be interested in forming a city wide federation, which would be an independent voice for tenants with regards housing services.

A Federation would need to show that tenants are truly in favour of having a Federation. Councillor Tony Damms had met with them 2 weeks ago to discuss matters and Councillor Harpham stated that he was also due to meet with them, together with the Interim Director of Housing Services, Janet Sharpe.

There might be consultation with regards to funding a Federation in the future, for example, if it was requested to do consultation work on behalf of the Council. However, this was not certain.

The Federation would need to find appropriate funding from tenants in order that it could be independent and accountable. The Federation should also prove that it was capable of obtaining such funding and must also evidence that it has the backing of the TARAs.

Councillor Harpham stated that he still saw a role for the tenants' engagement team and he wanted tenants to be involved. He wanted Sheffield to deliver the best housing service in the country, which needed both people with experience and new people to be involved and in order to achieve that, it was critical that TARAs were involved.

Question 9 Kevin Baldwin asked a question concerning roadworks in Parson Cross. He stated that a footpath had been left in a poor condition and asked why the condition of the highway had not been inspected. He also referred to holes which had been dug and left for a long period of time and to the

potential resultant problems.

Answer 9 Councillor Jack Scott responded that inspections took place once works were concluded and were quality checked to ensure they were of a high standard. Sometimes, spot inspections took place. Two zones were behind schedule, including Parson Cross. There was an issue concerning tarmac and how it was stored. Some holes were in place longer than they should be and this was clearly not helpful. The cause of delay may be weather conditions. There had also been instances of the barriers erected to protect the holes being blown over by high winds or moved or deliberately taken by people leaving the holes exposed. There was a performance requirement that where any holes became exposed, Amey, the Council's partner, was expected to fix the problem within two hours. However, people did need to report such issues. It was not possible or affordable to employ enough people to inspect every road every day. The Council relied instead on the public to notify problems. Dangerous circumstances were subject to a two hour repair time. He said that he was sorry that the Council could not afford to inspect the highway as often as people might like.

Question 10 Jean Shutt asked when the Norwood Estate would be improved.

Answer 10 Councillor Harry Harpham stated that work had been carried out on the Norwood Estate as part of the Decent Homes programme, which had made a real difference for people living on the estate. Part of the problem was caused by the withdrawal by the Government of Housing Market Renewal funding, which was one of the reasons that the Council was not able to bring about the changes which it wanted.

Councillor Dore stated that in Arbourthorne Ward, which she represented as the local Councillor, the area had been fortunate to have benefited from both Decent Homes and Housing Market Renewal investment. These recognised that some areas required investment to bring them up to a certain standard. Housing Market Renewal funding included improvements to features of the outside environment. The Council was reliant upon Government funding for such programmes.

Councillor Jackie Drayton, the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families stated that, with regard to Decent Homes' investment, some areas, including Norwood, had opted to go later. The Burngreave Area Panel had, in the past, used its resources to address the issue of trees on the estate, which has now been incorporated into the Streets Ahead programme.

Question 11 Ronnie Lewin referred to a spike in unemployment, which was over 50% especially among young black men and asked what the Council was doing in relation to financial inclusion. He stated that it seemed as if issues relating to Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities were 'off the table'. The BME Network was attempting to raise these issues to help make Sheffield a more inclusive place. He stated that in Burngreave,

through the Burngreave New Deal for Communities (BNDfC) programme, there had been lots of interventions, but now the situation was in danger of worsening. He asked what could be done in relation to unemployment, which was unmentioned and unsustainable.

Answer 11 Councillor Mazher Iqbal, the Cabinet Member for Communities and Inclusion, stated that there had been a general rise in unemployment across the City. The BNDfC programme was an initiative which had previously run over 10 years using Council and other resources. Two initiatives which supported the young and the unemployed were the Education Maintenance Allowance and Future Jobs fund and both had ceased. He agreed that the rate of 50% unemployment was disgraceful and the Council was looking to what it could do to improve this situation. Some groups were disproportionately affected by unemployment and changes to support which they might have previously received. The Council Apprenticeship scheme helps 100 young people every year and more young people from BME backgrounds had accessed those opportunities than other groups. The scheme addressed an unmet need and targeted young people who had not achieved the number of GCSE passes required to access the national apprenticeship scheme.

Councillor Iqbal stated that there was also an up-skilling programme with employers and the Council was working with the DWP (Department for Work and Pensions) and other organisations in this regard. He also referred to a challenge in the High Court with regard to the amount of European funding, which was allocated to South Yorkshire. The Council wanted to regenerate parts of the City and it required funding to enable such schemes. The RISE Graduate Programme and the Keep Sheffield Working Fund to support small and medium sized businesses were two other initiatives with which the Council was an integral part.

Councillor Jackie Drayton stated that, whilst there had been some improvements, the North East of the City, had a high number of people not in education or training compared to the City average. It also had a higher number of claimants than average and the Local Authority was seeking to address this issue.

Councillor Dore stated that inequality was a major issue in Sheffield and that with regard to youth unemployment and employment more generally, the Council had few powers or control in relation to funding. In-roads would only be made through central government funding and policy. The Council was doing everything possible at a local level but had to contend with the major inequalities which existed in the City. The Council's 100 Apprenticeship scheme was one where the Council subsidise the salaries for a specific group of young people and the proportion of BME young people on the scheme was higher than other groups.

Question 12 Stephen Cooke asked a question concerning 'eyesores' in Burngreave, including Osbourne House, Lyons Works and the Murco Garage site and whether an update could be given in relation to these locations.

Answer 12 A response would be made to Mr Cooke with regard to these sites.

Question 13 Helmi Ahmed asked what the Council was doing about a national problem that people were facing in the Page Hall area with regard to the Roma Community. He asked whether it was feasible for the Council to compulsorily purchase properties in affected roads, which he believed would resolve the problems.

Answer 13 Councillor Mazher Iqbal stated that when former Eastern (European) bloc countries became part of the European Union, rules were agreed concerning the free movement of people in Europe. The Migrant Impacts Fund was made available by the Government to support community development, health and schools provision. That resource ended in 2010.

He acknowledged that there were issues in the area and work was being carried out with partner organisations such as South Yorkshire Police. If anyone was thought to be breaking the law with regard to noise or anti-social behaviour, Councillor Iqbal encouraged people to report it to the 101 telephone number.

There was a master plan for the Page Hall area and if the Housing Market Renewal Funding had still been in place, this might have further progressed. He explained that the Council could not afford to purchase properties as the question suggested.

Councillor Harry Harpham stated that a Selective Licensing scheme was due to be introduced in the Page Hall area next month and landlords would be expected to meet certain standards and take some responsibility for tenants in their properties. The Council believed that Selective Licensing would help to address difficulties with regard to certain properties.

There was also work with the community advice centre and the Police and the Fir Vale tasking team. The private sector housing team would make sure that in future, landlords were meeting their responsibilities, which they had to tenants and to the community. There were lessons to be learned from the handling of migration from the EU in 2004.

Question 14 A question was asked concerning the potential problems of concentrating migrant communities in a single area, as with Page Hall.

Answer 14 Councillor Julie Dore stated that there were proposals for Page Hall and the Housing Market Renewal funding recognised that there were areas with properties of a lower value compared to others. Housing Market Renewal funding sought to address this by stabilising and equalising the housing market and leading to more settled and mixed communities.

However, in an area where property values were low, there might be over-saturation of properties owned by private landlords. It was difficult to alter

this situation without significant funding. The master plan for Page Hall proposed a rebuilding of the area with a mixed housing estate. Local people refused the proposal. The Selective Licensing scheme was one of the solutions which was now being introduced to address the problems in the area.

Councillor Mazher Iqbal stated that the Council was working with community organisations and with the Roma community and other populations and build capacity, learning and integration and this would take time.

Question 15 A question was asked concerning Concord Sports Centre.

Answer 15 Councillor Julie Dore stated that £700K of investment was being made to Concord Leisure Centre funded by the National Centre for Sports and Exercise Medicine. Facilities at Graves Leisure Centre and High Green would also be funded through the Olympic legacy project, bringing together sports and exercise, clinical and health aspects to explore how exercise can help with health conditions. This was the best opportunity to improve provision at Concord Sports Centre. It was expected that health referrals for individuals would be affordable for people and also means tested.

Councillor Mary Lea stated that, in relation to health referrals to exercise by GPs, one of the objectives was to address the problem of people living longer but with poorer health. Activity Sheffield had a scheme whereby people who are referred increased their level of exercise through tutorials and coaching to enable them to reach their exercise goals over 12 sessions. Community Health Champions and trainers helped people to change aspects of their lifestyle, for example with regard to smoking or managing stress.

A member of the public also commented that people could self-refer to such schemes.

Question 16 Stephen Cooke asked what remedial steps the Council was taking to improve air quality in the area.

Answer 16 Councillor Jack Scott stated that the Council had published an Air Quality Action Plan and emissions study. There were an estimated 500 premature deaths each year in Sheffield as a result of poor air quality. The Council was working with Leeds University to examine the areas which were most affected.

Sheffield had the best bus fleet in the country with regard to emissions and investment had been made in gas and hybrid buses and as part of the Sheffield Bus Quality Partnership. There were some gaps in the City's network of cycle lanes, which the Council wanted to address and to provide more routes in places in the North East area of the City, for example. The Council also wished to discourage unnecessary use of cars

where possible. With regard to the proposal to reduce the speed limit on the M1 Motorway, he stated that he had received a considerable amount of correspondence. Emissions from diesel engines also caused cancer.

Question 17 A question was asked concerning the poor condition of the area surrounding the Grimesthorpe Boys Club on Wincobank Lane, which was fenced off and was private land.

Answer 17 Councillor Jack Scott stated that a team had been at that site today to clean up the area. However, this could only take place on public land, unless there were issues of safety or of a criminal nature. He said that he would speak with the Police to see if the Police believed there may be evidence of criminal activity on that site or whether there was a reason for intervention or in the cleaning of the non-public area. Councillor Scott said that he would keep in contact with the questioner.

Question 18 Mick Daniels stated that, whilst Amey were said to be doing a good job with regards to resurfacing of highways and installation of new street lighting, his question concerned the other duties within their contract as regards other roads and footpaths. He asked whether a once yearly inspection on side roads was enough and stated that Amey representatives did not always turn up to walkabouts. It took a long time to get through on the 273456 telephone number and people often hung up because they were kept waiting. Not everyone had internet access, so online contact was not possible for everybody.

He asked why in Gleadless Valley, every street light had to be done at the same time, leaving unsafe holes all over the estate. Would it not be possible to do the lights on one street at a time?

Answer 18 Councillor Jack Scott stated that as part of Streets Ahead, a cleaning cycle took place every 13 weeks and Amey were paid a lot of money and therefore the Council wanted to see a good service. Annual inspections of the highway took place as was done elsewhere in the country and there were not sufficient resources to do otherwise. The Council therefore relied upon the public to report problems with regard to the City's highways through telephone calls and emails and 135,000 calls were received. The level of reporting varied across different geographical areas and some places had different levels of tolerance as regards the occurrence of litter, for example. People should be encouraged to report problems. One third of reports were presently made by email, with the majority made by telephone. Councillor Scott acknowledged that people sometimes had to wait for their call to be answered and said that he wished it was better, but there was not the resource available to improve things so as to reduce waiting times.

Amey should attend walkabouts and should be engaged with the community as Street Force had been previously. Amey had 24 hours in which to clear incidents of fly-tipping. With regard to Gleadless Valley, the replacement of street lighting was carried out as a complete zone and

lights were all on the same circuit.