

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council of the City of Sheffield held on Wednesday 2 December 2020, at 2.00 pm, as a remote meeting in accordance with the provisions of The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, and pursuant to notice duly given and Summonses duly served.

PRESENT

THE LORD MAYOR (Councillor Tony Downing)
THE DEPUTY LORD MAYOR (Councillor Gail Smith)

1	<i>Beauchief & Greenhill Ward</i> Simon Clement-Jones Bob Pullin Richard Shaw	10	<i>East Ecclesfield Ward</i> Andy Bainbridge Vic Bowden Moya O'Rourke	19	<i>Nether Edge & Sharrow Ward</i> Peter Garbutt Jim Steinke Alison Teal
2	<i>Beighton Ward</i> Bob McCann Chris Rosling-Josephs Sophie Wilson	11	<i>Ecclesall Ward</i> Roger Davison Barbara Masters Shaffaq Mohammed	20	<i>Park & Arbourthorne</i> Julie Dore Ben Miskell Jack Scott
3	<i>Birley Ward</i> Denise Fox Bryan Lodge Karen McGowan	12	<i>Firth Park Ward</i> Abdul Khayum Alan Law Abtisam Mohamed	21	<i>Richmond Ward</i> Mike Drabble Dianne Hurst
4	<i>Broomhill & Sharrow Vale Ward</i> Angela Argenzio Kaltum Rivers	13	<i>Fulwood Ward</i> Sue Alston Andrew Sangar Cliff Woodcraft	22	<i>Shiregreen & Brightside Ward</i> Dawn Dale Peter Price Garry Weatherall
5	<i>Burngreave Ward</i> Jackie Drayton Talib Hussain Mark Jones	14	<i>Gleadless Valley Ward</i> Cate McDonald Paul Turpin	23	<i>Southey Ward</i> Mike Chaplin Tony Damms Jayne Dunn
6	<i>City Ward</i> Douglas Johnson Ruth Mersereau Martin Phipps	15	<i>Graves Park Ward</i> Ian Auckland Sue Auckland Steve Ayriss	24	<i>Stannington Ward</i> Penny Baker Vickie Priestley
7	<i>Crookes & Crosspool Ward</i> Tim Huggan Mohammed Mahroof Anne Murphy	16	<i>Hillsborough Ward</i> Bob Johnson George Lindars-Hammond Josie Paszek	25	<i>Stocksbridge & Upper Don Ward</i> Jack Clarkson Julie Grocutt Francyne Johnson
8	<i>Darnall Ward</i> Mazher Iqbal Mary Lea Zahira Naz	17	<i>Manor Castle Ward</i> Terry Fox Sioned-Mair Richards	26	<i>Walkley Ward</i> Ben Curran Neale Gibson
9	<i>Dore & Totley Ward</i> Joe Otten Colin Ross Martin Smith	18	<i>Mosborough Ward</i> Tony Downing Gail Smith	27	<i>West Ecclesfield Ward</i> Alan Hooper Adam Hurst Mike Levery
				28	<i>Woodhouse Ward</i> Mick Rooney Paul Wood

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors David Baker, Lewis Dagnall, Kevin Oxley, Peter Rippon and Jackie Satur.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 In relation to agenda item 7 (Licensing Act 2003 – Statement of Licensing Policy) (item 6 of these minutes), (a) Councillor Jack Clarkson declared a personal interest on the grounds that he was a director of a company operating a licensed premises located within Sheffield but operated under the Barnsley licensing authority and (b) Councillor Paul Wood declared a disclosable pecuniary interest on the grounds that he held a Personal Licence and had involvement in licensed premises within Sheffield, and he did not speak or vote on the item.

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

- 3.1 The Lord Mayor (Councillor Tony Downing) reported that three petitions and questions from seven members of the public had been received prior to the published deadline for submission of petitions and questions for this meeting.

3.2 Petitions

3.2.1 Petition Requesting the Listing and Reopening of Tinsley Carnegie Library

The Council received an electronic petition containing 713 signatures requesting the listing and reopening of Tinsley Carnegie Library.

The Lord Mayor (Councillor Tony Downing) reported that the organiser of the petition, Mr Matt Smith, was not able to attend the meeting. In addition to the petition, Mr Smith had also submitted three questions on the subject of Tinsley Carnegie Library, as follows:

1. Is Tinsley Carnegie library currently listed by the Council for disposal?
2. What options have been explored by the Council and local community groups for community use of the building?
3. What are the current issues with the Tinsley Carnegie library which have prevented the Council from using it for community purposes and / or as a base for the area's Associate Library? Please give specific details of each issue and the estimated cost to rectify it.

The Council referred the petition and questions to Councillor Mary Lea, the

Cabinet Member for Culture, Parks and Leisure.

Councillor Lea stated that an application could be made by anyone to Historic England to have a building listed and a recommendation could be made by Historic England with a decision being made by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. The Council did not have a part in the decision making.

She explained that the library building (or Roundabout Centre as it was commonly known) was being considered for disposal. However, there were a number of complex legal issues relating to the building, including a covenant and those issues were being looked at further.

In relation to options that were being considered, the building required a considerable amount of investment in order to bring it back into use because it was in a poor condition and the Council did not have the budget to undertake that work. However, if a group believed that it was possible to find the necessary finance to enable the work, that was something that could be examined.

Councillor Lea said that she would respond to Mr Smith with the information in writing.

The Lord Mayor (Councillor Tony Downing) reported that questions had been received from James Newman Gray regarding Tinsley Carnegie Library, but as Mr Gray was not in attendance, a written response would be provided to him by Councillor Mary Lea, Cabinet Member for Culture, Parks and Leisure.

3.2.2 Petition requesting the Council to Implement a 20 mph Zone in Westfield and to Work with South Yorkshire Police to Tackle Speeding in the Area

The Council received an electronic petition containing 112 signatures requesting the Council to implement a 20 mph zone in Westfield and to work with South Yorkshire Police to tackle speeding in the area.

Representations on behalf of the petitioners were made by Kurtis Crossland. He stated that the Council was requested to implement a 20 mph speed limit in Westfield and to work with the police to help to enforce it. He referred to local concerns about motorists speeding.

The Council referred the petition to Councillor Bob Johnson, the Cabinet Member for Transport and Development. Councillor Johnson thanked the petitioners for bringing this matter to Council. He said that there was a schedule for delivery of 20mph zones in Sheffield and there were already 20 such schemes across the City. He said that unfortunately, the Westfield scheme had been assessed by the police and the Council and it was currently at number 11, based on accident statistics. He referred to schemes being implemented in places where they would have most effect and said that under current regional funding, it would be unlikely that the scheme

would receive funding either this year or next. However, it was on the list and hopefully it would continue to progress.

3.2.3 Petition Requesting the Installation of Double-Yellow Lines and Traffic-Calming Measures at Rundle Road/Kenbourne Road

The Council received a petition containing 56 signatures, requesting the installation of double-yellow lines and traffic-calming measures at Rundle Road/Kenbourne Road.

The lead petitioner was not in attendance at the meeting and the Council referred the petition to Councillor Bob Johnson, the Cabinet Member for Transport and Development, who said that a written response would be provided to the petition.

3.3 Public Questions

3.3.1 Public Question Concerning Crossing on Station Road

Kurtis Crossland referred to the petition presented to Council relating to a crossing on Station Road, Halfway and asked whether there was an update and if funding had been secured for the crossing.

Councillor Bob Johnson, the Cabinet Member for Transport and Development, responded to the questions. He said that funding had been identified for the scheme and it had begun to be drawn up. He said that he was not able at this time to give an exact timescale for the scheme, which related to work that was being done at the school. He said that he would, through local councillors, write to residents, and including Mr Crossland, about the scheme, which would also require consultation and the necessary notifications.

3.3.2 Public Question Concerning Vehicles on Open Space

Kurtis Crossland commented on concerns that vehicles used green spaces as off road tracks and asked whether the Council would consider putting up fencing to stop vehicles turning from Moss Way to the Shortbrook open space and in addition, fencing on the grass near Westfield Northway next to the football pitch.

Councillor Bob Johnson, the Cabinet Member for Transport and Development, said that in relation to the gap on Moss Way, there was a local infrastructure levy allocation and the issue relating to Moss Way might be something which Mr Crossland could pass to the three local Councillors for them to decide whether that was a priority for the local area. He explained that it was not likely to attract city-wide funding, given the prioritisation of areas of most need based on criteria.

3.3.3 Public Questions Concerning Georgian Shops on Devonshire Street

Nigel Slack asked questions concerning the row of Georgian shops on Devonshire Street. He said that in 2015, there had been public opposition of 22,000 people to the plans to redevelop the site including demolition of the Georgian row and like for like replacement with added residential space to the rear. He said that permission for the redevelopment was eventually granted. However, the developers then left the site empty for 5 years.

Mr Slack explained that a new permission was being sought to demolish the block of shops and replace them with a 4 storey office building. He said that application appeared to suggest that the case for demolition had been made and should therefore be a matter of course for the new plan. He asked the Council to confirm the following:

- That the first application's permission to demolish was within very limited and specific lines and not a general permission to demolish.
- That the planning history and the public and heritage groups responses in particular, will be part of the consideration.
- That the Council will not consider as they did in 2015 that their hands are tied due to strict planning laws, and that if the Council tried to block the application they could end up facing huge legal bills.
- After all if it is worth that risk to block the destruction of Green heritage, is it not also worth that risk for our built heritage.

Councillor Bob Johnson, the Cabinet Member for Transport and Development, responded that the previous application retained the façade onto the main frontages only. The planning history relating to the site would be a consideration in respect of any new and subsequent planning application and any responses received from interested third parties, including heritage groups and local communities, would be considered, as was the normal process. He said that, as was the case with all planning applications, the Council must consider matters which are relevant and policy frameworks which it must abide by as they governed the process.

3.3.4 Public Questions Concerning Space Standards for New Housing Developments

Nigel Slack said that it had been drawn to his attention that the city had not adopted any space standards for new housing developments, which reduced the ability to refuse “shoebox” developments. He commented that the position on conversions was far worse, because converting an office building into apartments was Permitted Development and did not go through the usual planning process. He further commented on the city, having pioneered decent Council housing nearly a hundred years ago, now permitting developments which do not meet national space standards for housing.

Mr. Slack asked the following questions:

- How the local plan, when finally adopted, would impact on minimum space standards?
- Will Council adopt a policy on minimum space standards in advance of the local plan and any changes to national policy?
- Will Council instruct that officers be more willing to challenge minuscule apartments, sending the clear message that such apartments raise amenity issues for residents?

Councillor Bob Johnson, the Cabinet Member for Transport and Development, stated that under the government regulations, the Council was only able to apply the national minimum housing space standards if these were confirmed through a policy in an up to date local plan. The Council intended to adopt the government standards in the new local plan. In its response to the recent Government White Paper, the Council had also urged the Government to apply standards nationally and through Building Regulations.

Councillor Paul Wood, the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Community Safety, said that all developments of social housing were well above the national standard and that included sites at Weaklands, Scowerdons, the Manor Cluster and the Older Person's Independent Living Units. He said that when he was able to and restrictions were not in place relating to the Coronavirus pandemic, he would be pleased to show the developments to Mr Slack to demonstrate the standards provided in social housing in Sheffield. He said that Sheffield had been praised by a national house building federation for having the best specification of social housing in any city outside of London.

3.3.5 Public Questions Concerning Mount Pleasant

Nigel Slack stated that it was two and a half years on from a decision about the disposal of Mount Pleasant. He said that local residents and activists were hoping to see a vibrant new neighbourhood amenity by now and instead there was a dilapidated empty building, undoubtedly suffering as a result. He asked about the current state of play on the sale of the site and the fate of the tenant in the stable block.

Councillor Bob Johnson, the Cabinet Member for Transport and Development, stated that all the legal documents had been completed in relation to Mount Pleasant, including the lease for the current tenant of the stable block and, once the existing tenant agreed to sign the lease, it would be possible to complete and the redevelopment and building work could begin.

Councillor Terry Fox, the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Governance, confirmed that the Council was waiting for the lease to be signed.

3.3.6 Public Questions Concerning Records Regarding Street Trees

The Lord Mayor (Councillor Tony Downing) reported that questions had been received from Marcus Combie regarding records relating to street trees, but that Mr Combie was not in attendance at this meeting. Councillor Mark Jones, Cabinet Member for Environment, Streetscene and Climate Change, stated that a written response would be provided to Mr Combie and he would also invite Mr Combie to meet with him.

3.3.7 Public Questions Concerning a Circular Economy

Rebecca Atkinson said that in December 2019, the Council resolved to move towards a circular economy as opposed to a linear economy where goods were used and then disposed of. She asked the following questions:

1. The Council resolved to define a metric for progress made in the transition to a circular economy. Has this been achieved and if not, what steps have been taken to achieve it?
2. In a proposed amendment to the original motion, it was suggested that the Council should 'develop proposals to introduce a pilot scheme for the collection of food waste from households'. This proposal was voted down. Given strong evidence that food waste collections have the positive impact of reducing household food waste, would the Council reconsider a pilot food waste collection in the city? What are the main barriers to trialling such a service?
3. The Council resolved to support local businesses to transition to closed loop systems. How has the Council fulfilled this pledge to local businesses over the past year and in what ways was it planning to do so in future?
4. In 2018/19 Sheffield had a household recycling rate of 31.0%. Does the Council have any formal target for increasing the rate of (a) household and (b) plastics recycling?

Councillor Mark Jones, Cabinet Member for Environment, Streetscene and Climate Change, responded to the questions. He said that work was ongoing to explore how Sheffield could respond to the issue of the circular economy and the low carbon economy and that work was near completion and that would help to formulate plans to enable a net-zero economy. Measures would be brought in with regard to support for the circular economy.

Councillor Jones explained that food waste in the black bins was currently processed through the energy recovery facility, generating low carbon energy for the city. Cost was the main barrier to a trial of food waste collection, elements of which might include vehicles, staff, containers and liners and educational support and materials. There would also need to be consultation on any such scheme. The Council had written to Rebecca Powell, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, to see when the

Government would be bringing forward a strategy and White Paper and in relation to funding to support this work. He said it was important that more was done with regard to food waste so that people could dispose of food appropriately and there was an educational element with regard to disposal of food waste and minimising waste.

He said there had been a massive reduction in the amount of waste from businesses, which had changed the nature of waste streams and the Council would need to see what it might do to support businesses in the context of the Coronavirus pandemic and it would work with business and emerging businesses.

Councillor Jones explained that as regards household recycling rates, Sheffield did not necessarily count garden waste in recycling, which gave the city an artificially low number. However, more did need to be done with regard to plastic recycling and other elements of the waste stream. He also stressed that less waste and less waste materials that needed recycling should be produced. He said that it was likely that the Government's target for recycling would not be met.

He referred to the South Yorkshire Waste Stream Strategy, in relation to which the Council had pledged to increase recycling by 10Kg per household by 2021. With regard to plastic, the Government's Resources and Waste Strategy of December 2018 included measures concerning the reduction of plastic waste and increased recycling, including a tax on plastic packaging, a deposit return scheme and a minimum requirement for councils to collect all plastic. The new proposals from Government were awaited and work would then be progressed as rapidly as possible. He said that this was critical work and it was regrettable that the Government had been slow in bringing these options forward along with the necessary funding. He said that he would look forward to further correspondence on these issues with Rebecca Atkinson.

3.3.8 Public Questions Concerning the Streets Ahead Contract

Justin Buxton had submitted questions for this meeting of Council. The Lord Mayor explained that question 4 relating to the Streets Ahead Contract would be permitted. However, questions 1 and 3 would not be permitted because Mr Buxton had not provided the actual questions. Question 2 was not permissible under the Council Procedure Rules as it concerned a named Member of the Council.

Due to technical difficulties resulting in the loss of Mr Buxton's connection to the remote meeting, the Lord Mayor requested that the relevant Cabinet Member respond to Mr Buxton in writing as regards question number 4.

4. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

4.1 Urgent Business

There were no questions relating to urgent business under the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 16.6(ii).

4.2 Written Questions

4.2.1 A schedule of questions to Cabinet Members, submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 16, and which contained written answers, was circulated. Supplementary questions, under the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 16.4, were asked and were answered by the appropriate Cabinet Members until the expiry of the time limit for Members' Questions (in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 16.7).

4.2.2 The Lord Mayor (Councillor Tony Downing) issued a reminder to the Cabinet Members that where, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 16.2, they have given an undertaking to provide a written reply after the meeting to a question submitted in writing, the reply should, wherever possible, be provided to the questioner within 10 working days of the Council meeting and also be published on the website.

4.3 South Yorkshire Joint Authorities

Questions relating to the discharge of the functions of the South Yorkshire Joint Authorities for Fire and Rescue and Pensions (under the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 16.6i), were not able to be asked before the expiry of the time limit for Members' Questions.

5. ORDER OF BUSINESS

5.1 RESOLVED: On the motion of The Lord Mayor (Councillor Tony Downing) and seconded by The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Gail Smith), that, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 9.1, the order of business as published on the Council Summons be altered by taking items 7 and 8 on the agenda [Licensing Act 2003 – Statement of Licensing Policy, and Coronavirus (Covid-19) Update, respectively] as the next two items of business.

6. LICENSING ACT 2003 - STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY

6.1 It was moved by Councillor Karen McGowan, and seconded by Councillor Andy Bainbridge, that approval be given to the Statement of Licensing Policy under the Licensing Act 2003, as set out in the report of the Executive Director, Place, now submitted.

6.2 Whereupon, it was moved by Councillor Douglas Johnson, and seconded by Councillor Ruth Mersereau, as an amendment, that the Statement of Licensing Policy under the Licensing Act 2003, as set out in the report, be approved with the following modifications:-

1. The retention of the existing policy statement on areas nearing levels of stress, namely -

“The licensing authority is particularly concerned about the following areas:

Area	Reasons for Concern
West Street and Division Street	The concentration of late night alcohol licensed premises and levels of crime and disorder, as well as the proximity to residential properties in some cases.
West Street, Devonshire Street and Division Street	The number of off licences and the related problem with street drinking and public nuisance in this area.
Broomhill	The number of late night refreshment premises in close proximity with patrons causing noise and disturbance when migrating between destinations.
Ecclesall Road	The number of liquor licensed premises, especially those with outside drinking areas, and late night refreshment premises in close proximity to residential dwellings causing noise and disturbance.

Applicants making applications for premises licences in these areas are advised to carefully think about the licensing objectives and the above areas of concern.

Applications for late night premises in any area of the city are expected to demonstrate a commitment to a very high standard of management and ensure that the operation of the premises will not create a public nuisance nor result in additional crime, disorder and antisocial behaviour in the area.

The licensing authority continues to monitor the areas it considers are nearing levels of stress, and will consider implementing a cumulative impact policy should the evidence show a major problem that cannot be tackled any other way.

In determining any applications for these areas, the licensing authority (sub-committee) will still take care to ensure the Guidance to the Act is applied and consider the merits of all individual cases.”

2. The addition of a policy on knife crime in order that applicants are required to consider proportionate and practical measures to reduce knife injuries in the night-time economy such as through door searches and entry systems for the detection of metal blades.

3. The addition of a policy on sexual harassment and domestic abuse in order that applicants are required to consider a proportionate and practical approach to protecting members of the public from sexual harassment, and providing a confidential and safe way of exiting the building safely to members of the public who are concerned for their own safety.”

6.3 After contributions from five other Members, the amendment was put to the vote and was negatived.

6.4 The original Motion was then put to the vote in the following form and carried:-

RESOLVED: That approval be given to the Statement of Licensing Policy under the Licensing Act 2003, as set out in the report of the Executive Director, Place, now submitted.

7. CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) UPDATE

7.1 Greg Fell, the Director of Public Health, provided an update on the latest position in relation to the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, including the latest epidemiology and key metrics, which indicated that the number of cases of Covid-19 was high and fluctuating, with a falling rate of infections. Transmission of Covid-19 was still principally in households and there was concern about the number of cases of the virus in the east of Sheffield. The average age of a case was falling but was stable in the age group 12-17 and the rate was stable or decreasing in all age bands. Incidence in the elderly had reduced to below a threshold of 150 cases per 100,000 population. The rate of positivity of those tested was 8.5 percent. Hospital activity related to Covid-19 was also falling, albeit slowly and hospitals were very busy.

7.2 Mr Fell outlined the effect of the local restrictions and the national lockdown on movement and in reducing the R (reproduction) number below 1. He set out the strategy and the arrangements and responsibilities for the City's response to the Coronavirus pandemic and its operational response as delivered through a range of services. An outbreak control plan was in place and matters were added to the plan as appropriate, such as asymptomatic testing and the vaccine.

7.3 Finally, he set out upcoming issues including a mid-December government review of which tier Sheffield was to be placed in; activity relating to testing, with testing of those with symptoms being most important; preparation for the vaccine; maintaining the fundamentals of people keeping a distance, washing hands and wearing face coverings and limiting the number of people with whom they had contact and protecting the community and vulnerable people by keeping community transmission low.

7.4 Greg Fell's presentation was followed by an opportunity for Members of the Council to ask questions and a summary of the questions and responses was as follows:

- 7.5 Questions were asked about lateral flow testing of students leaving and returning over Christmas and in the new year; with regard to the use of lateral flow testing for people visiting older people in care homes; the proportion of the population having had a vaccination to achieve herd immunity; and what could elected Members do to help to encourage people to have a vaccine.
- 7.6 Mr Fell explained that the DfE (Department for Education) had told Universities that students would have to receive lateral flow tests before leaving university to return home. It was not yet clear as to whether there would be the same requirement before students returned to universities, although it was a strong possibility. Whilst lateral flow tests provided tests quickly and with a good population coverage, there were limitations in accuracy and the possibility of false negatives. He said that the tests reduced the risks but did not remove them and therefore he was in favour of lateral flow tests albeit done very carefully.
- 7.7 Certain things needed to be in place before lateral flow tests were applied to care homes, including the standard operating protocol, training on how to manage results, clinical governance and risk management frameworks. It was likely that the necessary protocols would be in place by or before late December. Staff were tested through tests which were processed in a lab and that had made a significant difference in care homes. Lateral flow tests reduced some of the risk, but other measures were more important, such as people not visiting a care home if they had Covid-19 symptoms, wearing personal protective equipment and effective hand hygiene etc. Due to the limited accuracy of lateral flow tests, false negatives may arise and which could give false reassurance to people and which might create risk and so it was also important to risk manage the problems associated with lateral flow testing.
- 7.8 Greg Fell stated that the matter of herd immunity was complicated and depended upon the efficacy of the vaccine and the coverage of the vaccine in the population and the estimates were that between 60 and 70 percent of the eligible population needed to have been vaccinated before herd immunity was achieved. Positive communications about vaccination and saving lives were important.
- 7.9 He said that he believed that the two universities had acted very responsibly in relation to the pandemic. It was likely that there would be a staggered start for universities in the new year, probably with testing prior to them coming back and it was a case of managing the risks associated with a large number of students returning to the City.
- 7.10 Questions were asked about the role of the Director of Public Health in influencing the two universities; testing capacity over the Christmas period; how the Council could assist in preparing for the vaccination; testing of hard to reach groups and support for schools where there had been two or more positive tests leading to pupils and teaching staff needing to isolate. Further questions were asked about the likely timescale of a return to normality;

reassurance to people who might be anxious about vaccination; and how to improve awareness of the need to practice good hygiene and social distancing in the home.

- 7.11 Mr Fell responded to the questions and said that the public health team was in regular contact with both universities with regard to relevant processes, strategy and protocol etc and concerning managing cases and secure teaching environments. He also occasionally spoke directly with the two University Vice Chancellors. There was also a Director of Public Health representative on the DfE University working group, which provided the opportunity to influence policy.
- 7.12 He said that there were six testing sites in the city which would all be open, except for Christmas Day and he would make sure that appropriate communications were produced with regard to testing during that period.
- 7.13 Mr Fell explained that NHS England was responsible for the vaccination programme and the Council offered support to NHS England both in South Yorkshire and the Clinical Commissioning Group in Sheffield on such matters as suitability of sites and logistics. Importantly, Councillors and officers had good links to communities and the Council could help to reinforce positive messages in communities.
- 7.14 As regards managing outbreaks in schools, he said that there was direct communication between the school and the Council's public health team. A school's situation was risk assessed in order to manage clusters and cases.
- 7.15 He said that with regard to a question concerning a timeframe for a return to normality, it was difficult to say with any certainty. It would not be until significant numbers had been vaccinated. The efficacy of the vaccines had been proven and safety was also largely proven. As with all vaccination programmes, there was a process of long-term monitoring and the science would continue to develop.
- 7.16 Greg Fell said that SAGE (the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies) had produced advice with regard to what might be done to minimise coronavirus transmission in the home, and the Council's communications team was also doing some work on the issue of minimising risk in people's homes.
- 7.17 He said that in relation to hard to reach groups, one of the uses of the outbreak management fund was a peripatetic swabbing and testing service, which was run by Primary Care Sheffield, including for homeless people and others of insecure housing and a similar approach would be taken with other hard to reach groups.
- 7.18 Questions were asked about certainty with regard to statistics about the number of cases; sustaining a reduction in the number of cases; the likelihood of transmission in people's homes; and the long term effect on people's mental health and the lasting consequences of Long Covid. Further questions were asked about the effect of the end of the recent lockdown and people

undertaking activities such as Christmas shopping; and with regard to the eating of a substantial meal with alcohol in hospitality settings and the connection with transmission of the coronavirus.

- 7.19 Greg Fell responded that the testing and test positivity rates were monitored and the testing rate was broadly stable, whilst the case rate was falling. As to why there was a discrepancy between the Covid-symptom study app and the case data, he explained that test positivity was 8.5 percent and 91.5 percent of people had symptoms and no virus. In addition, there were more people with respiratory symptoms in the winter period and which would be reported. There was concern about people thinking that rates were reducing and then being less vigilant in their behaviours. Whilst the virus would be caught somewhere, transmission was mostly in households as they tended to be less Covid-secure as they were likely to be cleaned less and people might believe they were safe at home and may get closer to others.
- 7.20 Mr Fell said that the reproduction rate (R) was lower than 1, and the infection rate was falling and people did need to continue to take care. Rather than any physiological link between alcohol and Covid-19, it was thought that once someone had consumed alcohol, they may let their guard down and loose inhibitions. The hospitality trade had made huge efforts to make pubs Covid-secure, although there might have been some transmission in hospitality settings as in many other settings.

Support to Businesses in Sheffield

- 7.21 Edward Highfield, Director of City Growth and Alexis Krachai, Sheffield Chamber of Commerce and a representative of the Sheffield Business Recovery Group, provided a presentation on the work undertaken to support local businesses during the Coronavirus pandemic. They were accompanied by Ben Morley, Head of Programmes and Accountable Body, City Growth Service. There was then an opportunity for Members of the Council to ask questions.
- 7.22 Edward Highfield outlined some of the things the Council was doing to support business, setting out the economic outlook, business impact, support the Council was providing to business and in respect of the Business Response Group and a Business Recovery Plan. Mr Highfield summarised the Office of Budget Responsibility's three scenarios as to the economic and fiscal effects of the Coronavirus pandemic, based on different public health assumptions and relating to unemployment and the long-term effects on GDP (Gross Domestic Product). He said that the economic and social effects of the pandemic were unprecedented and that it would take years to recover from the consequences, including on inequalities in the City.
- 7.23 He set out the effects on businesses, which included reduced demand and sales and issues relating to managing cashflow and businesses seeking to minimise losses until they were able to trade again safely. Staff were working from home and adapting to different ways of working and social distancing measures and staff absences all presented significant challenges to

businesses. He also outlined the effect of the pandemic and related restrictions on the sales and bookings of businesses in various sectors and drew attention to those most affected such as in the areas of hospitality, hair and beauty, events, hotels, bars, restaurants and the night-time economy.

7.24 Mr Highfield summarised the types of critical support the Council had provided to businesses, including dealing with enquiries, appointments with specialist business advisors, virtual workshops to help businesses survive the pandemic; and supporting businesses to access government grant schemes. He outlined the support made available to larger businesses and those in the hospitality, accommodation and leisure sectors and assistance to ensure businesses opened up safely.

7.25 Edward Highfield briefly reflected on the continuing effect of uncertainty and the impact on demand of tiered restrictions introduced by the Government; the importance of Christmas trade to sales; the effect of reduced consumer confidence; issues relating to debt finance; the limitations of the grants available to business; and adaptation and recovery. He said that there had been some good strong partnerships and collaborations across the public and private sector and which would provide a platform for the city in future and in respect of recovery and addressing the longer term issues.

7.26 Alexis Krachai then outlined activity relating to the Sheffield COVID-19 Business Response Group, which had identified six priorities to help the business community bounce back from the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic, as follows:

- Stimulating demand in the local economy
- Opening our city and district centres safely and securely
- Helping to stimulate the conditions to encourage more start-ups in the city
- Developing our skills base as a city to help communities get back to work
- Stimulating investment in culture to help rebuild confidence and visitor numbers
- Working with business leaders on a longer-term economic strategy for Sheffield

7.27 Mr. Krachai spoke about each of these priorities in turn and he also set out the phases of the recovery plan - firstly, relief and the short term actions needed to keep businesses solvent and trading during the severe restrictions on economic activity; secondly, recovery and help for businesses to adjust and adapt; and, thirdly, renewal to address the structural weaknesses in the economy and a more sustainable, fair economy.

7.28 Members asked questions and made comments and responses were provided, as summarised below:

- 7.29 Comment was made about how business leaders had come together with the Council at this time and in relation to hard work and dedication that had been shown and the investment in the business recovery plan for the city.
- 7.30 A question was asked about what was being done to improve engagement and communication with the small business sector and, in response, Members were informed that information had been disseminated on the radio and printed and social media and available networks, email and letter and through elected members. The communications strategy for businesses was considered very regularly. Nonetheless, there was a concern about only communicating with people who were already known, and it was acknowledged that things could be continually improved and there was a fundamental question as to where a small business person consumed information. If there were new ideas to help improve communication and engagement, these would be welcomed.
- 7.31 As regards a question about people starting to pursue an alternative business opportunity where an existing one may have failed in the pandemic, it was thought that timing was important in order that there was sufficient clarity, consumer confidence and demand for people to attempt to establish another business and for them to be encouraged and supported in that process. The £2 million recovery fund was for the delivery of projects early in 2021 and it was intended to identify with businesses the things that would make a difference to them in the community and in addition to existing support and services. Support was available for people with an idea for a business from business advisors and workshops which covered issues such as exporting, VAT or registration with Companies House.
- 7.32 Edward Highfield explained that there was potentially larger sums of money available through the Sheffield City Region, perhaps through the Growth Hub and such as was made available from the Business Investment Fund, which helped businesses such as with new plant and machinery. It was hoped that there would be further such support for businesses and to help with a new business idea or the refresh of an existing business. The City Region had a recovery plan, and it was hoped that larger scale support for businesses would also be available from the Government and through the City Region.
- 7.33 The city was working well with the City Region at an operational and a strategic level and whilst not duplicating, had aligned and mirrored the same three phases in the city's recovery plan as were in the City Region's plan. Sheffield had also identified areas of particular focus and drive, such as culture where it was considered there was a distinctive city element to recovery, and with regard to encouraging business start-ups.
- 7.34 Ben Morley explained that the City Region was allocated £30 million to make available through grants, including to support businesses which were not rate payers but did have property and other areas of need, such as the grant for taxi drivers resident in South Yorkshire. A scheme was also to be made available for businesses in a supply chain for hospitality, accommodation,

entertainment and leisure. These would be for relatively small amounts of money and which reflected the funding the Government had made available. Other options were also being examined, within the money available. Work was underway in South Yorkshire to identify small and perhaps home-based businesses and other vulnerable sectors to see what support might be provided. However, there was high demand and limited funding and decisions were being made as to how best to use the available funding.

- 7.35 Mr Highfield said that in relation to a comment concerning what was meant by 'culture', and areas including sport, nature and heritage, and their potential to help enable other aspects of the economy, the Business Response Group had stressed that the recovery plan would need to remain flexible and 'culture' was not narrowly defined, but included heritage, the outdoor city and those other aspects. This would need to be considered further and as part of the recovery plan.
- 7.36 Edward Highfield explained that Business Rates grants worth £98 million had been allocated in Sheffield. £113 million was provided by the Government, based on assessment of the City's rating list. However, there was not that number of rated businesses in Sheffield and some of the money provided by Government was unallocated. The Council wrote to the relevant Government Minister, identifying the gaps in the national schemes and asking whether some of the unspent money might be reallocated into the discretionary fund. The Minister refused that request and said that the money would be transferred back to Treasury and it was currently awaiting transfer to the Treasury.
- 7.37 In terms of businesses which had not been eligible for grants and whether they might benefit from subsequent support, that would depend on the reasons why they were ineligible to begin with. There were for example, some cases of fraudulent claims. However, if there was a chance that businesses were eligible for grants, the Council was following it up and would proactively contact people, to say that whilst they were not eligible for earlier grants, they might now be eligible for one.
- 7.38 Comment was made about the importance of culture and events in the City in stimulating demand and recovery.
- 7.39 The Council noted the information reported and thanked all of the presenters for attending the meeting and providing their updates and for answering Members' questions.

(NOTE: During the above item of business, it was - RESOLVED: On the motion of The Lord Mayor (Councillor Tony Downing) and seconded by The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Gail Smith), that the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 5.5 be suspended and the termination of the meeting be extended by a maximum of 30 minutes to provide time for Members' questions to be asked and answered in relation to support to local businesses.)

8. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS COUNCIL MEETING

- 8.1 RESOLVED: On the Motion of Councillor Tony Damms, seconded by Councillor Garry Weatherall, that the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 4th November 2020 be approved as a true and accurate record.

9. REPRESENTATION, DELEGATED AUTHORITY AND RELATED ISSUES

- 9.1 RESOLVED: On the Motion of Councillor Martin Phipps, seconded by Councillor Douglas Johnson, that:-
- (a) Councillors Angela Argenzio and Ruth Mersereau be appointed as additional Planning and Highways Committee Substitute Members; and
 - (b) Councillor Dianne Hurst be appointed to serve on the Audit and Standards Committee, filling a vacancy.