

SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

Strategy and Resources Policy Committee (Extraordinary)

Meeting held 21 December 2023

PRESENT: Councillors Tom Hunt (Chair), Angela Argenzio, Penny Baker, Dawn Dale, Dianne Hurst (Group Spokesperson), Douglas Johnson (Group Spokesperson), Shaffaq Mohammed (Group Spokesperson), Zahira Naz, Joe Otten, Martin Smith, Richard Williams, Mark Jones (Substitute Member) and Minesh Parekh (Substitute Member)

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Fran Belbin and Ben Miskell.

2. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

2.1 It was noted that the appendices to the reports at item 10 and 11 were not available to the public or press because they contain exempt information. If Members wished to discuss the exempt information, the Committee would ask the members of the public and press to kindly leave for that part of the meeting and the webcast would be paused.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

4. APPOINTMENTS TO SUB-COMMITTEES

4.1 RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That Strategy and Resources Policy Committee approves the appointment of Councillor Henry Nottage to the substitute member vacancy on the Charity Trustee Sub-Committee.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS RELATING TO THE ISSUES TO BE DISCUSSED

5.1 The Leader welcomed the public questioners and explained the format of the meeting. After the public questions have been presented there will be a statement from the Leader reflecting on the feedback from stakeholders and the August 2023 meeting. Following this, the other party/group leaders will be invited to comment. Officers will then introduce the next two items together for discussion and approval: Equality Framework – Equality is Everyone’s Business; and Race Equality in Our Council.

Sahail Chohan and Jawed Siddiqi attended the meeting to ask the following questions that they had submitted:

The Race Equality Commission released its final report on 14 July 2022. The report found that racism remains deep-seated and prevalent in all key institutions in Sheffield. Evidence from this report highlighted the urgent need

for SCC to put together an action plan to tackle the existing racial disparities. We note with concern that little progress has been made within the council and see no evidence that the council is aware of any progress within the other key institutions (public or private sector).

Can you guarantee the citizens of Sheffield that you will meet the pledges of the Race Equality commission report and endeavour to become an anti-racist city by July 2025?

Does SCC have a strategy with clear objectives and deadlines and an agreed budget allocated to help support the work proposed by the Race Equality commission report?

Will you actively pursue invitations to all the council's large public sector organisations, businesses, trade unions, community organisations particularly BAME communities - including those that actively participated in this process - and members of the public to open meetings, to discuss the concerns raised by the REC report ahead of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting pencilled for March 2024?

How do you propose to operate in the future so that there is significant involvement of key stakeholders relating to all protected characteristics?

The Leader thanked the questioners for attending and presenting their questions. He indicated that he would answer the questions now presented in the statement he was about to make and go on to introduce the next two items.

Firstly, thank you to all of the residents and community organisations who are passionate about tackling racism in our city. I'd like to express my sincere gratitude for your tireless work to bring about change. I'd like to thank all of the former members of the commission for their hard work and service to the city, and to all of the staff, residents and partner organisations across the city who have worked with us and who will continue to work with us in our ongoing efforts to become the anti-racist organization and anti-racist city that we have committed to become.

Sheffield City Council is the city's premier convening organisation. It is incumbent on us to take a leadership role in race equality and people rightly expect us to. In August, I reflected that not enough of that had happened since the Race Equality Commission report was published. We should have been the first mover, we weren't. As the Leader of the Council, it is my utmost priority to help eradicate all forms of racism within Sheffield. I believe that collectively we can and must achieve this, it will take time, but together we can bring our diverse communities together and create an inclusive city for everyone.

As Leader, I also have a role in promoting standards of conduct, including inclusion. I've centred this in my thinking since taking up this role in May. Since this committee met in August to discuss the Race Equality Commission, I have made time to listen, think about and learn more about the experiences of staff in this Council and residents across Sheffield. At that meeting we heard that residents wanted us to show leadership and ownership. They were disappointed and frustrated that quicker progress wasn't made by the whole city on the legacy body and sceptical that the Council was committed to race

equality. I understand that entirely. Today, and going forward, I hope that residents will see that progress is being made.

Sheffield Stand Up to Racism have asked us a series of questions today and in their August petition. In the petition they asked that we provide an action plan with appropriate budget and deadlines and a plan for how anchor organisations will respond to and meet the recommendations of the Race Equality Commission. Today they've asked us to affirm that we'll meet the promises we've previously made and become anti-racist.

Our Race Equality in Our Council report, which we are considering today, speaks directly to the feedback we have had and directly answers these questions. We are unequivocal in our position: we are going to be an anti-racist organisation, we are going to be an anti-racist employer and we are going to support Sheffield to become an anti-racist city. This is clear through the statements of intent the report asks us to agree, champion and hold each other to account against. The report provides clear objectives, clear actions and clear deadlines, supported by budget, which come together as a multifaceted approach to guide our future work and complete the Race Equality Commission's recommendations.

The report shows us the progress against each of the qualities the Race Equality Commission told us an anti-racist organisation would have as a minimum. This offers me reassurance that we're going the right way and have the potential to become the organisation we want to be. But the question then becomes – how? How will we get there? I am glad to see we have over 30 specific actions in this report to help us move forward. This report links specific activity to responsibilities and further work, and sets us up to show we can deliver against these serious set of actions. The report is about us and this Council. While some of the actions might seem very focused on us, they are about how we change our ways of working and our culture for the benefit of everyone in the city. Other anchor organisations are doing similar work to plan their approach.

Lots of organisations in this city contribute a huge amount to residents. And those organisations are facing challenges today and have faced challenges for a long time. The Race Equality Commission pointed to historic funding inequities, we have started to address these through being more open about to whom we give grants, and positive work between our procurement teams and diverse business board is taking place, but there's more to do. That is why we are conducting both a review of our relationships with the voluntary and community sector and faith organisations, and it's why the governance committee have a programme of work on engagement. But I am clear that changing how we work doesn't mean putting more of a burden on key partner organisations. Our work must be to support black and minoritised ethnic led organisations to thrive, and to make things fairer for them, not harder.

The Race Equality Partnership for Sheffield, which is a shared endeavour across the city, is now being implemented following the tireless work of the legacy body task-and-finish group over the last 6 months. The process of

appointments for key roles is forthcoming from the Partnership and will be open, fair and transparent. It will provide the forum for residents, community groups, public and private sector organisations, stakeholders and others to work together on a level footing. It will allow organisations to share their work, learn from best practice and ensure that we are moving forward as a city.

Through the Partnership, our engagement work, review of relationships with voluntary and community sector and faith organisations, our diverse business board and ongoing direct meetings, we are and will continue to regularly come together with partners and communities across our great city to discuss and take action to accelerate race equality, work with and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, and achieve the goals of our Equality Framework.

Before I handover to Councillor Mohammed and Councillor Johnson for their reflections, I want to highlight the accountability section of the report. This reminds elected members of our power and our responsibility. It is within our gift to ask about race and equality at every committee meeting and in all other council meetings and forums we are in. That might sound like a small thing to do, it isn't. It would set a standard and tell people what we value. If every meeting has proper, thoughtful consideration of these things we will see them integrated into everything we do, and every report we see.

This is important because people will rightly judge us by our words, but crucially also by our actions. Next year I want us to be able to look back on a year where we've seen action around race equality in the Council, in our Groups and in these formal settings. I want to see that officers and members have grabbed the opportunity this report gives us. This work is ongoing, we aren't going to be done next year or the year after, but if we each take these steps we will accelerate change. That is the task at hand for all of us.

And every one of us here should use our influence to make sure that happens. Because even when we may not be in complete agreement, we have the same goal of tackling racism and making this an inclusive city for all.

Councillor Mohammed, thanked the questioners for attending and the work that they do to hold the Council accountable. Any form of discrimination holds the city back and prevents us reaching our potential and must be tackled. The importance of visiting students to the city, some of which become prominent business people and politicians and the importance of their lived experience of the city was recognised. The key to success will be the lived experiences of local communities. It is recognised that the Council did not move quick enough and we must take that on board. There is also a responsibility for organisations beyond the Council.

Councillor Johnson thanked the questioners and the other Members for their comments. He reflected on the historical position and welcomed the statements and actions proposed in the reports as we move towards being an anti-racist city, not before time. He referred to the statistics that show the demographic changes happening in the city. In particular, he referred to census

information in respect of schools and in housing. Whilst there is still a way to go there is a developing change of culture in the Council, moving away from defensiveness, which is welcome and very important as we move towards our goal of becoming an anti-racist organisation.

The Leader summarised by confirming the cross party support for cultural change. We will be judged by our actions and the report contains 30 proposed actions to hold us to account on. We are keen to have an ongoing conversation with you the questioners and the communities you represent. Officers then went on to present the two reports.

6. EQUALITY FRAMEWORK – EQUALITY IS EVERYONE’S BUSINESS

- 6.1 The Chief Operating Officer presented a report proposing a new draft Equality Framework for Sheffield City Council, to include the Council’s proposed ambitions relating to equality, diversity and inclusion for the next four years as we seek to fulfil the vision set out in the Council Plan of becoming an organisation that puts people at the heart of what we do. By taking the learning from the Race Equality Commission and elsewhere, this framework fundamentally repositions the organisation’s approach to equality, diversity and inclusion over the next four years.

At the heart of the Equality Framework are the proposed new statutory Equality Objectives for Sheffield City Council. These will sit alongside the outcomes agreed in the Council Plan to provide a clear focus to our work on EDI. The Equality Objectives are focused around our three core roles in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion, namely:

- City and community leadership: championing equality through knowledgeable and inspirational leadership, and building a fairer Sheffield by fostering good relationships, listening, and engaging with the city’s diverse communities and together becoming an anti-racist city
- Service provider: providing supportive, accessible and customer centred services which increasingly understand and meet the needs of all Sheffield’s communities.
- Employer: Further developing a culture where employees feel safe, valued and have a sense of belonging, where equality is everyone’s business, and by building a representative and highly skilled workforce which reflects the city’s diversity

- 6.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That Strategy and Resources Policy Committee:-

(a) endorses the draft Equality Framework;

(b) agrees the draft Equality Objectives as set out within the Framework, subject to public consultation;

(c) agrees to proceed with public consultation on the Equality Framework and Equality Objectives and bring to this committee a further report following that consultation;

(d) agrees that the further report will include detailed action plans for each Objective setting out how they will be achieved; and

(e) notes that in line with a recent Council motion, and the recent decisions taken by the Strategy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 13 December 2023, care experience (those who have at any part in their childhood been part of the care system) will be treated as an equality characteristic by the council in situations where protected characteristics are considered (including, but not limited to, equality impact assessments).

6.3 Reasons for Decision

6.3.1 It is recommended that Strategy and Resources Committee approve the equality framework as it will support the fundamental repositioning of the council's equality, diversity and inclusion work in line with the ambitions of the council plan and our work to embed anti-racism within the organisation and the city. By agreeing the framework, the committee will also ensure that we meet our statutory obligation to publish a set of four-year equality objectives.

6.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected

6.4.1 The Council has previously agreed that it should pursue a specific approach to equality rather than one where equality is 'mainstreamed' within other activity. Because of the importance given to equality, diversity and inclusion within the draft City Goals and Council Plan this report does not recommend a change to that approach. Furthermore, there is a statutory requirement for the council to adopt a set of Equality Objectives, as proposed in this Framework. As such no alternative options have been considered.

7. RACE EQUALITY IN OUR COUNCIL

7.1 Ajman Ali, Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services, and Meredith Dixon Teasdale, Director of Children's Services, attended the meeting in their capacity as race champions, to present this report and talk about the Council's commitment to race equality. They were joined by the Director of Policy and Democratic Engagement in whose area the equality team sits, and Lucy Heyes, who worked with colleagues across the Council to bring together this report.

The report provides the Council with a holistic, future-facing approach to race equality. Building on the progress already made, it sets out in part 1 what we stand for as a Council and in part 2 where we are as an organisation, including on the 7 qualities the Race Equality Commission (REC) said an anti-racist organisation would have in place as a minimum. Part 3 sets out the action we will now take, illustrated with work which has already taken place. This report responds to feedback encouraging the Council to take ownership, implement

action with more pace and make clear what race equality means to us as an organisation and what our approach will be.

The REC published its final report on 14 July 2022. Commissioned by elected members, chaired by Professor Emeritus Kevin Hylton and supported by 24 commissioners, the REC gave Sheffield an account of race equality in the city and a set of recommendations for areas requiring improvement.

Sheffield City Council made the promise set out in the REC report and in doing so agreed to implement the recommendations which were relevant to the Council, become an anti-racist organisation and facilitate the formation of a legacy body. The Council responded to the REC in December 2022, bringing to this Committee an action plan to address the recommendations. In August, this Committee reviewed progress and committed to go further, faster.

7.2 RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That Strategy and Resources Policy Committee:-

(a) agrees to adopt part 1 (pages 4-5) of the report now submitted and support and challenge officers, partners and each other, in a spirit of joint endeavour and kindness, so that everyone aligns what they do and how they do it against shared statements of intent;

(b) through this report, and in individual letters of thanks, formally acknowledge the Race Equality Commission, its independent Chair and its 24 commissioners, including Council staff members who took on commissioner roles alongside their work, and those who supported them (paragraphs 22-24);

(c) notes part 2 of the report (pages 6-14) which sets out data on race in our city and our progress against the 7 qualities the REC said an anti-racist organisation would have in place as a minimum;

(d) agrees the actions in part 3 (pages 15-29) and champion the report's aims across the Council's policy committees, and across the breadth of the Council's committee system, and ask the Governance Committee to support the implementation of this approach;

(e) agrees that elected members on key committees will be the first tranche of members to undertake an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) level 2 equivalent certificate (paragraph 35e);

(f) agrees the accountability roles and responsibilities (paragraphs 43-44);

(g) notes the substantial, positive work of the legacy body task and finish group and extend gratitude to its chair, members and those who have supported its work (paragraphs 45-48); and

(h) approves the Council budget of £100,000 over four years, earmarked in the 2024/25 Business Planning to fund internal spend on the Council's external contribution to work around the Race Equality Partnership for Sheffield

(paragraphs 49-52).

7.3 **Reasons for Decision**

- 7.3.1 To build on progress to date and provide the Council with the next stepping stone in the on-going journey towards race equality.

7.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

- 7.4.1 This Committee agreed that the Council should pursue a specific approach to race equality. This report does not recommend a change to that approach.

8. **STREET TREE INQUIRY PROGRESS REPORT**

- 8.1 The Director of Policy and Democratic Engagement submitted a report providing an update on progress made towards the actions agreed as part of the Council's response to the Independent Street Tree Inquiry, as agreed at the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee meeting on 19 June 2023. It highlights the work done to date to deliver the agreed actions and sets out proposed next steps.

- 8.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That Strategy and Resources Policy Committee:-

(a) notes the progress made towards the actions agreed in the June 2023 'Learning from the past and moving ahead: response to the Sheffield Street Tree Inquiry' report, as detailed in the report now submitted;

(b) agrees the proposed next steps, as set out at paragraph 1.33 of this report; and

(c) agrees to receive a further report in July 2024 on progress towards the recommendations agreed in the June 2023 report.

8.3 **Reasons for Decision**

- 8.3.1 By agreeing the recommendations, the committee will ensure that continued progress is made towards achieving the recommendations of the Street Tree Inquiry. This is a critical part of the journey of rebuilding the trust and confidence of our communities following the street tree dispute and will support the achievement of our Council Plan ambitions in this area.

8.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

- 8.4.1 This report was produced in accordance with the Strategy and Resources Committee's decision of 18 June 2023, requesting an update on progress made towards the recommendations made in the Sheffield Street Tree Inquiry report. The only alternative option would have been not to produce an update report, which has been discounted.

9. IDENTIFYING THE FUTURE ROLE OF CENTRAL LIBRARY AND GRAVES GALLERY BUILDING

- 9.1 The Executive Director City Futures submitted a report containing a proposed way forward for the future of the Central Library/Graves Gallery building, with potential timeline, for Member discussion and approval.

Central Library/Graves Gallery building is a beloved Sheffield landmark which needs to be reimagined for the future. Members need good information on the feasibility of various options for its future, to help decide a way forward.

Integral to this process are:

- A vision and location for Central Library and Archive services.
- A vision and feasibility for the future use of the building, as a nationally significant destination gallery.

Resources for repair surveys are required immediately to allow a repair programme to be designed and costed, and progress made as options are considered.

- 9.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That Strategy and Resources Policy Committee:-

(a) approves the process of exploring the options for the future of the Central Library/Graves Gallery building, as set out in the report, including:

- Further work to understand the full extent of the Central Library building's condition
- Development of a vision for a 21st Century Central Library and Archives including options for how and where this could be located
- Development of the vision and work to assess the viability of transforming Central Library/Graves building into a nationally significant destination gallery;

(b) approves the use of reserves of £420k to fund initial surveying costs, to begin facilitation of an interim repair programme to be designed and costed;

(c) notes a request for funding to be identified to support further design costs as well as a financial model to support identified investment in the Building as part of the Accommodation Strategy;

(d) notes the interdependencies with the City Centre Accommodation Strategy;

(e) notes the potential outline timeline for the activities, including a further report in June 2024;

(f) notes that Place Feasibility Funding is being sought to support the

options/visioning activity in Recommendation (a); and

(g) endorses the development of a public engagement plan for the elements of this project

9.3 Reasons for Decision

9.3.1 The recommendation above set out a process and indicative timescale for gaining the in-depth information needed to inform future decisions on the Central Library/Graves Gallery.

Without this additional information, Members will not be able to make a well-grounded decision.

There is real urgency for the future of this Sheffield landmark to be secured, with the potential for exciting options for future gallery and library development. However, the financial, operational and service provision implications need to be fully understood.

9.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected

9.4.1 Other options have been considered but are not recommended:

- Do nothing – which would have consequences for health and safety, would lead to the building's closure, and would incur costs in keeping the building secure.
- Take a decision without the feasibility work.
- Members have already made clear that they do not wish to vacate the building and market it as a development opportunity

9.4.2 By commissioning additional information and survey work to inform the long-term development of the Central Library/Graves Gallery, Members will have the best opportunity to make a sound choice on the future of the building. Without this additional information it will be difficult to make an appropriate choice; therefore, an alternative option is not being considered.

(NOTE: (1) During the discussion of the above item the Committee agreed, in accordance with Council Procedure rules, that as the meeting was approaching the two hours and 30 minutes time limit, the meeting should be extended by a period of 30 minutes); and

(2) At the conclusion of the above item the meeting adjourned for a short break.

10. WHOLE COUNCIL BUDGET UPDATE AND DELIVERY OPTIONS

10.1 The Director of Finance and Commercial Services submitted a report outlining the progress to date from each Policy Committee in delivering a balanced budget for 2024/25 and to note the budget proposals for the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee. Details of the Government's local government funding settlement, announced earlier in the week, were provided and the implications on the budget were set out.

During consideration of this item of business, and in order for Members of the Committee to ask questions on the exempt appendix of the report, it was **RESOLVED**: That the public and press be excluded from the meeting and the webcast be paused before further discussion takes place on the grounds that, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, if those persons were present, there would be a disclosure to them of exempt information as described in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended.

The meeting was re-opened to the public and press, and the webcast was recommenced, prior to the decision being taken by the Committee.

10.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That Strategy and Resources Policy Committee:-

(a) notes the budget proposals presented to the Policy Committees, as detailed in the report now submitted;

(b) notes that action is required by those Committees not presenting a balance position; and

(c) notes this Committee's initial response for budget proposals, as set out in this report, including Part B.

10.3 **Reasons for Decision**

10.3.1 The recommendations in this report sets out the next steps to deliver a balanced budget for 2024/25 and the HRA housing rents.

10.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

10.4.1 The Council is required by law to deliver a balance budget and therefore each Committee needs to delivery savings to achieve this. No alternatives have been considered at this stage.

11. **UPDATE ON PROPOSED AGREEMENT FOR LEASE OF THE FORMER COLES BUILDING**

11.1 The Executive Director City Futures submitted a report updating Members on the current position with regard to the proposed agreement for lease of the former Cole Brothers store in Barkers Pool and seeking approval to enter into an agreement with Urban Splash.

During consideration of this item of business, and in order for Members of the Committee to ask questions on the exempt appendix of the report, it was **RESOLVED**: That the public and press be excluded from the meeting and the webcast be paused before further discussion takes place on the grounds that, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, if those persons were present, there would be a disclosure to them of exempt information as

described in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended.

The meeting was re-opened to the public and press, and the webcast was recommenced, prior to the decision being taken by the Committee.

11.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That Strategy and Resources Policy Committee:-

(a) notes the current position and progress on the proposed agreement for the lease of the former Cole Brothers store in Barkers Pool since the last report to Committee; and

(b) agrees that the Council should now progress to finalising the Agreement for Lease as set out in Part 2 of the report now submitted.

11.3 **Reasons for Decision**

11.3.1 The proposed Agreement to Urban Splash will result in the delivery of an exciting mixed-use scheme comprising flexible workspace and cafes/retail/leisure/cultural uses/event space which are all considered to be complementary uses to the rest of the Heart of the City project. The development will create space for new jobs, places to shop, eat and visit and will help to increase the vibrancy and attractiveness of the city centre for residents and visitors.

11.3.2 Urban Splash has a strong track record of working with many public sector parties. The proposed project team have redeveloped many challenging and listed buildings, including both historic and post-war structures and have expertise in engaging communities in redevelopment and delivering programmes of meanwhile use.

11.3.3 Bringing this vacant listed building back into active use will be hugely beneficial both for the wider city centre and the surrounding Heart of the City Scheme. Retaining the large majority of the structure, whilst improving the thermal performance and energy efficiency of the building, should have a positive impact on climate change.

11.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

11.4.1 As stated in the previous reports to this Committee in August 22 and in March and June 23, the Council could decide not to progress with a disposal of the building at the present time. However, to do so would lead to further delays and uncertainty around what is an important building for the regeneration of the city centre and possibly reputational damage to the city's image from many people both within and outside of Sheffield.

11.4.2 Retaining the building without securing its redevelopment will have financial implications for the Council both in vacant property management, security and holding costs and in potential blight suppressing values and interest in the

surrounding property and the Heart of the City scheme

(NOTE: During the discussion of the above item the Committee agreed, in accordance with Council Procedure rules, the meeting should be extended by a further period of 30 minutes).

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