

## Council (Budget) Meeting – 6<sup>th</sup> March 2024

### Questions Received from Members of the Public, answered by the Relevant Policy Committee Chairs

(Updated on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2024)

Name of Questioner	Question	Relevant Policy Committee Chair(s)
Abid Hussain	<p>The South Yorkshire Muslim Bereavement Trust (SYMBT) welcomes the Council’s efforts to develop a comprehensive city-wide Bereavement Strategy, including the provisions in fulfilling the special religious needs of the 50,000 strong Muslim communities. As the Council approves its Budget for 2024/25 today on 6th March and given the depletion of burial space within the city across all cemeteries, and in particular Shiregreen and City Road, could the Council provide a detailed position on what revenue and capital allocation has been set aside for advancing the development and implementation of the City Wide Bereavement Strategy. Specifically, this should include the capital allocation in 24/25, 25/26, 26/27 and 27/28, which will be required to either acquire new sites or develop sites that are in Council ownership.</p> <p><b><i>An answer was provided at the meeting and the webcast and minutes (when published) can be found here:</i></b></p> <p><a href="#">Agenda for Council on Wednesday 6 March 2024, 2.00 pm   Sheffield City Council</a></p>	Cllr Richard Williams (Chair of the Communities, Parks and Leisure Policy Committee)
Ibrar Hussain <i>(not present to ask his questions)</i>	<p>1) At Shiregreen Cemetery’s new Muslim section we have an urgent issue of waterlog in every grave. This needs to be looked at urgently to address the cause, an urgent independent investigation is needed to explore the subject? And relevant policy to look into this issue as a priority too in public?</p> <p><b>Answer</b> - We understand the wet ground conditions at Shiregreen Cemetery are distressing for people who have loved ones buried there. We want to reassure everyone that the concerns which have been identified are being taken seriously and appropriate investigations are being undertaken. It is important to reassure people at this time that the surface water</p>	Cllr Richard Williams (Chair of the Communities, Parks and Leisure Policy Committee)

	<p>which is creating the wet conditions above ground and in the 'pre-dug empty graves' which are used to facilitate short notice Muslim funerals, is unlikely to be representative of the ground water conditions. Our climate is changing, and we need to have a long-term proportionate response to managing ground water in cemeteries, in accordance with national regulations. The Council is currently conducting a city wide (cemetery) ground water risk assessment in line with recently updated Environment Agency guidance. The outcome of this risk assessment will determine if further investigations are needed, which may include further hydrological tests at specific cemeteries. If these tests are needed, they will be carried out by appropriately qualified specialists. If needed, these tests will determine what, if any, further action is required.</p> <p>2) When is the Highways service going to review all bus gates and bus lanes in Sheffield, so all bus gates and lanes are updated and accessible to the taxi trade in Sheffield? The review is well overdue and senior officers have committed, but to date not delivered as usual.</p> <p><b>Answer</b> - Thank you for the question.</p> <p>I want this review to happen as soon as possible.</p> <p>Unfortunately, the Transport Projects team is currently operating with several vacancies which we are working to address and there is an increased workload associated with capital funded projects as well as updating the management of the Council's traffic regulation orders.</p> <p>Whilst this has caused an unavoidable delay, I share your frustration and apologise for the delay.</p> <p>As a consequence, it has not been possible to undertake a full-scale review of bus priority measures, including bus lanes and bus gates, in Sheffield.</p> <p>But we will start this review as soon as we can as part of the update to our management of moving traffic regulation orders.</p> <p>And I will ensure that that Transport Projects Team will meet with you and other members of the taxi trade to ensure that this is done right.</p>	<p>Cllr Ben Miskell (Chair of the Transport, Regeneration and Climate Policy Committee)</p>
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	<p>We know we need to get on with this and I am committed to this.</p> <p>Once we have a clear timeline, I will ensure this is made known publicly and direct to you.</p> <p>3) Is this Council going to support and ask the Government to stop cross border working in Sheffield and England to stop vehicles and drivers licensed in other authorities but working in Sheffield continuously/ predominantly? Can the Council take a clear position and all political parties submit a joint motion to address this issue?</p> <p><b>Answer</b> - The Council recognises the importance of local hackney and private hire services and the crucial role they play in our transport network. The journeys they provide are a lifeline for many, they underpin our evening and night-time economies and not least, the sector provides a significant number of jobs, both directly and through the wider supply chain.</p> <p>We fully believe that service users should expect to be served by licensees who are licensed in the area in which they are predominately serving. This ensures that licensees have sufficient knowledge about the local area and that local authorities can adequately enforce. Allowing licensees to work out of area does little to promote public safety and makes the work of local authorities more difficult, specifically in terms of investigating complaints and in carrying out safety checks on such drivers and vehicles licensed elsewhere.</p> <p>Sheffield has some of the highest licensing standards in the country and we welcome the provisions of the Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards 2020, the Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Disabled Persons) Act 2022, and the Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Safeguarding and Road Safety) Act 2022, requiring all licensing authorities to operate to high standards.</p> <p>We continue, however, to be concerned about the many challenges that out-of-area working presents to licensing authorities, and the apparent increase in such practices.</p>	<p>Cllr Joe Otten (Chair of the Waste and Street Scene Policy Committee)</p>
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	<p>The Waste and Street Scene Policy Committee did write to the Secretary of State on this matter in 2022. In response, the Government indicated that they were aware of the challenges out-of-area working presents to licensing authorities and that it was looked at as part of the Task and Finish Group on Taxi and PHV Licensing. There was no consensus on how to tackle the issue and the Government concluded that it would not, at this time, take forward out-of-area restrictions.</p>	
<p>Russell Johnson</p>	<p><b>COMPLAINTS</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Why has the Formal Complaint from those illegitimately pressured to sign a draconian Undertaking during the events described by Sir Mark Lowcock so far taken about three years to date and is not expected to be concluded for several more months?</li> <li>2. Why has a straightforward Complaint from a concerned member of the public regarding alleged breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct so far taken eleven months to process?</li> </ol> <p>Does the Leader understand that, in view of the above, citizens are entitled to be cynical about the sincerity of the Council's apology following the Inquiry Report. It seems to some observers to be another case of 'sorry, not sorry', particularly in view of the apparent absence of accountability for the whole Street Tree Debacle and the more recent 'Containergate', 'Plauegate', Banner Cross street redesign consultation and Market Tavern blunders.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. When will Sheffield City Council adopt and properly and enthusiastically implement the new LGSCO [Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman] Complaints Handling Code? If it is not the intention to adopt, why is that?</li> </ol> <p><b>GOVERNANCE</b></p> <p>The Lowcock Inquiry usefully examined some aspects of the culture and actions of the Council during the period concerned and within the brief he was working to. It is not and could not ever be a comprehensive analysis providing descriptions of and remedies for Sheffield City Council's failures as manifested during the Scandal.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. When will the Council cease dishonestly pretending that his work represents the 'final word' and treat Sheffield's people with proper</li> </ol>	<p>Cllr Tom Hunt (Leader of the Council &amp; Chair of the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee)</p>

	<p>respect? Does the Leader appreciate that his regime's current approach on this matter gives the impression of a cowardly organisation?</p> <p><b>Answers were provided at the meeting and the webcast and minutes (when published) can be found here:</b></p> <p><a href="#">Agenda for Council on Wednesday 6 March 2024, 2.00 pm   Sheffield City Council</a></p> <p><i>(NOTE: Subsequent to the meeting, it came to light, following receipt of a challenge to the accuracy of the response given at the meeting by the Leader of the Council, that the Leader had inadvertently omitted to state several words which had been included in his pre-prepared written response and that those words were of relevance to his explanation of why the formal complaints received in 2021 had been put on hold. The words which had been omitted at the meeting were “and the Council’s response to it”, and the complete response should have been as follows:-</i></p> <p><i>“He stated that the formal complaints submitted in 2021 had not been progressed at that time. This had been because the Independent Inquiry into the Street Trees Dispute had been announced, and it had been felt that the Inquiry and the Council’s response to it, would be the better way to resolve the issues raised.”)</i></p>	
<p>Justin Buxton (questions presented by Russell Johnson)</p>	<p>1. When sharing the design proposals for the promised commemorative plaque on the 16th of November 2023 to a few individuals, did the Council infer that it should be subject to non-disclosure to any concerned campaigners other than the unknown individuals provided with the design proposal in this first instance?</p> <p>2. Was any consultation with campaigners or 'stakeholders', sought regarding the plaque design before the 16th of November 2023? If not, why not?</p> <p><b>Answers were provided at the meeting and the webcast and minutes (when published) can be found here:</b></p> <p><a href="#">Agenda for Council on Wednesday 6 March 2024, 2.00 pm   Sheffield City Council</a></p>	<p>Cllr Tom Hunt (Leader of the Council &amp; Chair of the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee)</p>

<p>Graham Wroe</p>	<p>On 23rd January, I sent Cllr Miskell and the Transport, Regeneration and Climate Change Policy Committee an admittedly very long list of questions, compiled by a group of climate activists from various groups. Some of these questions have been answered, some not. You can see the progress here.  <a href="https://telltetruthsheffield.org/2024/01/24/five-years-since-declaring-a-climate-emergency-how-are-sheffield-city-council-doing/">https://telltetruthsheffield.org/2024/01/24/five-years-since-declaring-a-climate-emergency-how-are-sheffield-city-council-doing/</a></p> <p>The climate emergency is accelerating at a terrifying pace. For instance, in 1980 global temperatures had increased by 0.5C since the pre-industrial period. It took 30 years for temperatures to breach 1C in 2010. Then in just 14 years, temperatures increased another 0.5C to 1.5C in 2024, the level that climate scientists have long warned us will lead to unstoppable feedback loops and then possibly the hothouse earth scenario where the planet eventually becomes uninhabitable.</p> <p>In light of this and the recently released plans for new housing at Neepsend and Furnace Hill, I would like to ask the following previously submitted but as yet unanswered questions about Housing (this is just a short selection of the list of unanswered questions).</p> <p>3fi. Will the Council commit to building all future council-owned or managed housing to a high energy efficiency or operationally net-zero standard in 2024?</p> <p>3fii. <u>A fabric-first approach to building design</u> involves prioritising the building envelope (walls, roofs, floors, windows, and doors) to create a high-performance, energy-efficient building. Will the Council require developers to use a fabric-first approach in new developments in 2024?</p> <p>3fiii. Will the Council require developers to carry out a <u>whole life cycle carbon assessment</u> of new build developments in 2024?</p> <p>3fiv. Will the Council remove <u>minimum parking requirements for new residential homes</u> in 2024?</p> <p>3fv. Will the Council require 20%, or above, of onsite renewable energy generation for new building development in 2024?</p>	<p>Cllr Ben Miskell (Chair of Transport, Regeneration and Climate Policy Committee) &amp; Councillor Douglas Johnson (Chair of the Housing Policy Committee)</p>
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