

Policy Committee Decision Report

Title of Report:	Caring, engaged communities: putting people at the heart of what we do
Date of Decision:	16 October 2024
Report To:	Strategy and Resources Policy Committee
Report Of:	Director of Policy and Democratic Engagement and Director of Customer Experience and Communities
Report Author:	Laurie Brennan, Head of Policy and Partnerships
Executive Summary:	<p>Our Council Plan sets out our ambition to put people at the heart of everything we do. We are making significant progress to deliver the outcomes set out in the Council Plan and through the Future Sheffield Programme, we are transforming the City Council to make us a customer and community-focused organisation.</p> <p>The development of our Strategy Framework has enabled us to quickly identify gaps in our strategic architecture – where we haven't got a longer-term, tier 1 strategy that provides direction, focus and enables us to prioritise our resources.</p> <p>We have recognised that we lack a clear, consistent and co-created overarching ambition for how we work with and for the communities of Sheffield. Therefore, the paper proposes that over coming year, we work with communities and our Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector to co-create a collective, long-term ambition for communities in Sheffield that helps to deliver our City Goals.</p> <p>Further, the paper provides an initial reflection on the city's response to the violent racially motivated disorder that affected many parts of the country in the summer of 2024 (Appendix 1); and a response to the Full Council resolution on "reaffirming Sheffield as a city of sanctuary" and to agree to seek reaccreditation as a Local Authority of Sanctuary (Appendix 2).</p>

Council Plan outcomes: [List the relevant outcomes as set out in section 3]

[A place where all children belong and all young people can build a successful future](#)

[Great neighbourhoods that people are happy to call home](#)

[People live in caring, engaged communities that value diversity and support wellbeing](#)

[A creative and prosperous city full of culture, learning, and innovation](#)

[A city on the move – growing, connected and sustainable](#)

Policy Committee remit:

This report is to be considered by the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee as its remit includes responsibility for any issue identified as being of significant strategic importance or financial risk to the Council (which is considered to be by its nature cross-cutting).

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? No

Recommendations:

Strategy and Resources Policy Committee is recommended to:

1. Request officers to initiate the development of a new Communities Strategy in collaboration with community and other partners, with a draft to be presented to the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee in early summer 2025 and a final version of the strategy following formal consultation to be presented to the committee in September 2025
2. Approve the establishment of a cross-party Member reference group to support the development of the work
3. Note the response of the city's communities and the council to the violent disorder that affected many parts of the country in the summer of 2024
4. Note the information contained in Appendix 2 of the report which responds to the Full Council resolution on "reaffirming Sheffield as a city of sanctuary" and to agree to seek reaccreditation as a Local Authority of Sanctuary.

Financial Implications: No - Approved by: Matthew Ardern

Legal Implications: No - Approved by: Andrea Simpson

Equality and Inclusion Implications: Yes – Approved by: Ed Sexton
Initial Equalities Impact Assessment completed with EIA number: 2857

Climate Change Implications: No – Approved by Laurie Brennan

Background Papers:

Council Plan 2024-28 – <https://council-plan.sheffield.gov.uk/>

Customer Experience Strategy - [Sheffield City Council Customer Experience Strategy DRAFT v1.0](#)

Delivering for Sheffield: Strategic Framework - <https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/documents/s69746/SC%20strategic%20framework%20Appendix%203.pdf>

Future Sheffield Business Case – [FS Next Steps - SR Committee 240724 FINAL SUBMITTED.pdf](#) (sheffield.gov.uk)

Our approach to engagement with citizens and in communities - [Draft Protocol for Cabinet Reports \(sheffield.gov.uk\)](https://www.sheffield.gov.uk)

Appendices:

[Appendix 1: The city's response the racist and Islamophobic violence in August 2024](#)

[Appendix 2: Response to the Full Council resolution on reaffirming Sheffield as a city of sanctuary](#)



1. Background – together we get things done

- 1.1 The richness and diversity of Sheffield’s communities are one of the city’s greatest strengths. By working together with our communities, we know that we can have a significant and positive impact on wellbeing and prosperity across the city. Our services reach and touch our communities in a multiplicity of different ways – from the way in which the Local Plan supports the ongoing development of neighbourhoods to the delivery of libraries to the support we provide our tenants to our network of Family Hubs or our locality-based care and support and many, many more.
- 1.2 In our Council Plan, we established our mission for the council – [‘together we get things done’](#), committing to working shoulder to shoulder with the people, communities and organisations of our amazing city to deliver real change to make Sheffield a prosperous and successful major city. Building on the policy drivers and the five strategic outcomes set out in the Council Plan, we are working hard to deliver for the city, putting our Plan into action.
- 1.3 Underpinning the Council Plan, we have started to put in place the key, [‘tier 1’ strategies that form our Strategy Framework](#). These strategies provide greater detail on the ambitions in the Council Plan and set direction for our teams over the medium to long term. They also provide certainty and clarity for partners, investors and citizens about what we are going to achieve in the years ahead. These tier 1 strategies include our new Housing Strategy, our 10-point Climate Change Plan, the draft Local Plan and our adult health and care strategy, ‘Living the Life You Want to Live’. These are vital parts of our strategic direction and will increasingly become the focus for how we invest our funding and capacity in the coming years.



- 1.4 But, as set out in the Council Plan, we recognise that we need to change to ensure that we can deliver for the city with a relentless focus

¹ Future Sheffield Transformation Programme - Update and Next Steps, Appendix 3 - <https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/documents/s69746/SCC%20strategic%20framework%20Appendix%203.pdf>

on providing joined up, accessible services that meet the needs of everyone who uses them; this will mean that people are genuinely at the heart of everything we do and that we empower communities.

- 1.5 We know that our current ways of working do not sufficiently enable this. There is an opportunity to have a more strategic, joined up approach that is aligned to our Council Plan ambitions and supports the transformation of our organisation through the Future Sheffield programme.
- 1.6 Future Sheffield is the Council’s transformation programme, our plan for change and improvement to become the organisation the city needs in order to deliver our City Goals and the outcomes in our Council Plan.
- 1.7 Our operating model sets out how the Council will work in future. It enables us to develop the operational detail and working arrangements we need as we change key parts of the council through the Future Sheffield programme. [We’ve previously described the new operating model](#) as the “*picture on the top of the jigsaw box*” which sets out what we want our Council to look like and helps us focus on how we make changes and deliver according to this.



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- 1.8 Running right across and through that operating model is our approach to empowering communities – emphasising that everything we do as an organisation will be firmly centred on the people of Sheffield. Future Sheffield and the operating model is our commitment to Sheffield City Council organising itself around our Council Plan’s mission, empowering communities and serving customers. It means transforming how the future organisation engages and interacts with its

² Future Sheffield Transformation Programme - Update and Next Steps, - <https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/documents/s69746/SCC%20strategic%20framework%20Appendix%203.pdf>

citizens and local communities to meet their needs and wants. It particularly focuses on growing community connections, prevention and early intervention, as well as the initial contact points for customers requiring information, support or services.

2. Creating a shared vision for communities in Sheffield

- 2.1 The development of the Strategy Framework has also meant that we have been able to quickly identify gaps in our strategic architecture, where the outcomes in the Council Plan need an underpinning tier 1 strategy that provides direction, focus and enables us to prioritise our resources.
- 2.2 The Strategy Framework, alongside the operating model, has demonstrated that while we have a range of enabling strategies (eg. Customer Strategy, the Governance Committee-led work on a community engagement strategy), vital relationships (eg. with the city's Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise Sector, VCFSE) and existing assets and activity (e.g. Local Area Committees, Welcome Places, community development), we lack a clear, consistent and co-created overarching ambition for how we work with and for the communities of Sheffield.
- 2.3 While this is a gap in our Strategy Framework, it presents a timely opportunity to work together with communities across Sheffield and with the VCFSE sector to develop a collective, long-term ambition for communities in Sheffield that helps to deliver our [City Goals](#).
- 2.4 As part of this, we recognise that communities take many shapes and forms, and that most people in the city belong to multiple communities – those that are geographically-based around neighbourhoods or local areas; those that reflect shared identities, cultures or interests; and those that reflect other aspects of people's lives (such as work or school). Our approach must reflect this diversity of what people mean when they say 'community'.
- 2.5 Through the development of City Goals and existing relationships with communities and the VCFSE sector, we collectively have a wealth of insight into the value and vibrancy of communities in every part of our amazing city and the challenges we face. We need to give greater consideration to the respective roles of the different partners, the expectations we have of each other and how we can best utilise our collective strengths and assets to deliver for the people of Sheffield.
- 2.6 We also need to create space to consider how Sheffield City Council best structures itself to be an effective, empowering and collaborative



partner of communities – ‘*leading and taking action where we need to and getting out of the way where others are better placed*’.³

Opportunity to bring coherence and a shared ambition for communities in Sheffield

- 2.7 Co-creating a new Communities Strategy with VCFSE partners, stakeholders, communities and citizens presents an opportunity to connect our City Goals and Council Plan ambitions with a single framework that succinctly sets out what we want to achieve over the coming years and why. It should set direction for underpinning strategies and delivery plans, ensuring that all future action is prioritised and focused on contributing to the ambitions that we have agreed with communities and VCFSE partners.
- 2.8 Developing the new strategy will support a coordinated approach to our thinking on a range of related issues about how the council works in and with communities including (but not limited to) community safety, cohesion, community assets and infrastructure, locality-based service delivery, community engagement, community development, community-based early help and prevention, and democracy and decision-making in our communities.
- 2.9 As part of this, the new strategy should reflect and recognise the critical role of the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sectors in supporting strong and sustainable communities and the huge value they bring to our city: VCFSE organisations are vital in enabling communities to flourish. As such, the strategy will seek to describe a renewed, mutually supportive relationship between the council and the sector that recognises the intrinsic value of the sector as a strategic partner; for the way in which it can support people and communities of the city; as well as the part that it plays in delivering services (both publicly funded and not).
- 2.10 We do not anticipate that the strategy itself will provide all of the answers about what we will do. But, it should set ambitious, long-term direction and how we will work in a joined-up way across the council to work with and deliver with and for our communities most effectively. The detail of delivery will be included in the Tier 2 strategies and action plans that will accompany it, including our Customer Experience Strategy and the developing Community Engagement Strategy.

³ Sheffield City Council, Council Plan 2024-28



Our proposed approach

- 2.11 If the Committee agrees that undertaking this piece of strategic development would be beneficial, it is proposed that the work required would take place between now and spring 2025, ensuring there is appropriate time for meaningful engagement and co-design with communities and the VCFSE sector. Allowing time is vital to ensure that this strategy is built by and with communities, VCFSE partners and Members, an inclusive approach to achieve a strategy which reflects the ambitions of our city.
- 2.12 It is proposed that a draft version of the strategy is brought to the Strategy and Resources Committee for consideration in early summer 2025 with formal public consultation taking place after that. This would allow a final version of the strategy to be approved by the committee in September 2025.
- 2.13 The intervening period would be used for deep engagement with the communities of Sheffield and other stakeholders. This will not seek to rerun previous engagement exercises – we will make use of important information and insight that people have already given us that is relevant to this work (for example, the work that was done to support the development of the City Goals or the engagement that has been done by Local Area Committees around the development of their community plans). Instead, the new engagement that we will look to do for this piece of work will build on and fill the gaps in what we already know. But more fundamentally, it will look to engage communities and stakeholders in designing the new approach.
- 2.14 If the Policy Committee agrees the recommendations set out in this report, the immediate next steps for this work will be as follows:
- To establish the Member reference group to oversee the development of the strategy and, working with community stakeholders, determine how this might be supplemented with additional members to provide a wide range of different views and perspectives
 - To undertake desktop research and analysis to build an insight and evidence pack from recent relevant engagement and consultation activity.
 - To engage VCFSE partners in how the co-design of the strategy should happen to enable community stakeholders to contribute most effectively.

3. How does this decision contribute to the Council Plan?

3.1 Council Plan outcomes

3.1.1 As noted in the body of the report, this decision is intrinsically linked to the achievement of the ambitions set out in the Council Plan.

3.1.2 By developing a Communities Strategy of the sort proposed, we will be better able to take forward all five of the outcomes set out in the plan. The plan describes the Council's mission as being 'together we get things done'. It is clear that:

"we will work with you - the people of Sheffield, with other public services, with our voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) partners, with business and with Government as a whole council to get things done for our great city.

3.1.3 By delivering the outcomes set out in this plan, we will help to achieve the City Goals. We will listen, involve, collaborate with others and empower – leading and taking action where we need to and getting out of the way where others are better placed."

3.1.4 The proposed Communities Strategy will fundamentally support the achievement of this mission, as well as filling a key gap in our supporting strategic framework, and enabling the transformation required as part of our underpinning Future Sheffield programme.

3.2 People – Prosperity – Planet

3.2.1 The Council Plan sets out a very clear policy 'triple lock' that all decisions must consider. This triple lock is composed of three policy drivers – people, prosperity and planet

3.2.2 **People** – the new Communities Strategy will have people at its heart. It will take as its starting point the Council Plan ambition in this area, namely that "we will listen, involve and work with the people of our great city. We will celebrate and stand up for the diversity of Sheffield, maximising the assets and strengths of communities, connecting more people into the city's success and creating opportunities for everyone. We want everyone in Sheffield to achieve their potential with fulfilling and healthy lives."

3.2.3 **Prosperity** – We will only have a prosperous city if all of our communities are enabled to thrive and contribute to the growth of Sheffield. As such, having a strong and joined-up approach to how we



work with our communities will have a direct impact on achieving prosperity as a city. As the Council Plan says: “The more our people succeed, the more our whole city will succeed” and the Communities Strategy will be fundamental to this.

3.2.4 **Planet** – Similarly, having an effective and integrated Communities Strategy will support and enable the work that we need to do to achieve net zero, and to create a sustainable city for future generations. The Council Plan is clear that creating a sustainable future can only happen with the support and active involvement of our communities. As such, the Communities Strategy will play a key part in helping us to achieve our wider ambitions for the environment.

3.3 City Goals

3.3.1 As stated in the body of the report, the development of the Communities Strategy will directly support the Council’s contribution to the city goals, particularly the third ‘story’ – a Sheffield of Thriving Communities – which includes within it goals to improve accessibility for all across our neighbourhoods and communities; to improve voice and the ability for all to shape what happens in their communities; and to embed strong and caring relationships that bring people together and bridge divides. However, it will also make a contribution to many other of the goals across the other stories.

3.4 Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy

3.4.1 The city’s new ‘*Fair and Healthy Sheffield*’ Plan sets out eight building blocks which are the foundations that need to be in place for everyone to live a long and healthy life and four radical shifts to transform how we work as a city. The aim of the plan is to close the unfair gaps in length and quality of life by improving the health and wellbeing of those worst off the fastest.

3.4.2 Building strong relationships and a sense of belonging in communities, and empowering people to work together and take action is a critical part of achieving the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Communities across the whole of Sheffield have assets and capabilities and collaborating with them making sure that everyone in our communities can have a say, be heard, and play their part in making decisions is fundamental to making the city healthier and fairer.

3.4.3 Our Communities Strategy should support this, enabling, empowering and respecting the role that all our citizens can play in the future of our city.

4. What community or partner engagement has been undertaken and how has it informed the proposal?

- 4.1 At this stage, there has not been any dedicated citizen engagement on the proposed Communities Strategy but as set out in the above, the intention is co-create the Strategy with communities, VCFSE partners and stakeholders over the coming year.
- 4.2 However, it is important to recognise that we have significant insight from recent involvement and engagement activity which we will draw upon to help shape the Strategy. This includes the Collaborative Conversations, [sentiment](#) information and [statistical](#) data that supported the development of Sheffield's City Goals, insight from Local Area Committees, and drawing on wider engagement activity such as from the Housing Strategy.
- 4.3 We will also ensure that we link to the ongoing work of the Governance Committee on a new Community Engagement Framework for the city and utilise the learning and guidance in the recent '[Foundations for Good Engagement](#)' which was presented to S&R Committee in July 2024. As part of its ongoing work on community engagement, the Governance Committee will shortly receive the write-up from a workshop that the committee ran with community representatives; this will also be highly relevant to this work.

5. What alternative options did we consider?

5.1 Alternative Option 1:

Do nothing

We could choose to continue without a Communities Strategy but as the as detailed above, having a shared vision and set of ambitions with communities is a critical part of the Council Plan and city council's transformation into a community and customer focused council.

5.2 Alternative Option 2:

Produce a strategy more quickly

Recognising the gap in our Strategic Framework, we could choose to develop the new Communities Strategy more quickly. However, this would significantly limit the extent of community and VCFSE involvement in the co-creation of the strategy and risk the resulting vision and ambitions not being shared by the people of Sheffield.



6. How has equality, diversity and inclusion been actively considered?

- 6.1 The development of the Communities Strategy, and more broadly, the Council's approach to community engagement, will have clear equalities implications. Engagement in and with communities is a fundamental principle not only of an organisation seeking to work openly and collaboratively but one that recognises that more needs to be done to avoid creating barriers to involvement and to tackle barriers that already exist.
- 6.2 In developing and introducing the strategy, the Council should recognise both the opportunity and the requirement (as set out in the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty), to have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is connected to protected characteristics and prohibited by or under this Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not; and to
 - foster good relations between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 6.3 The Communities Strategy has the potential, directly or indirectly, to address inequalities in community participation, some of which may be deep-seated and long-standing. For example, developing accessible approaches could help to address inequalities associated with financial exclusion, geographical barriers, age (particularly younger people and older people), race (including communities whose first language isn't English), disability and health. The strategy development should also take account of other communities of interest (for example, LGB or Transgender) that may often be less represented.
- 6.4 Moreover, the strategy is being developed at a time of significant community interest in social events with strong equality connotations. For example, the protests and disorder referred to above, community responses relating to the conflict in Gaza, gender-based disagreements and protests, safer streets awareness. There are national debates about equality and diversity that speak directly to the experience of communities. Public authorities need to respond to these in the exercise of their functions, in fostering good relations and other duties, and when developing community-focused strategies. Age-Friendly City, Disability Confident and other equality-based initiatives are also important reference points for the strategy.
- 6.5 An initial Equality Impact Assessment has been opened for this paper and will be updated further to inform the ongoing development of the strategy.

7. Financial and Commercial Implications

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications of this report as the initial work will be undertaken from within existing resources.
- 7.2 Any further developments and resources requirement will be presented in future reports as required.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. Any legal implications identified as the Communities Strategy is developed will be considered when it is brought back to the Committee for further decision.

9. Climate and Environmental Implications

- 9.1 There are no direct climate or environmental implications arising from this report. However, as described elsewhere in the report, having an ambitious shared vision for communities will support and enable the work that we need to do to achieve net zero and our climate commitments.

10. Other implications

- 10.1 N/A

11. Reasons for decision

- 11.1 To take steps to ensure that Sheffield has an ambitious vision for communities in the city, which is co-created and owned by communities and sets long-term direction for the Council and its relationship with people and partners.
- 11.2 To respond positively to the Full Council motion on “reaffirming Sheffield as a city of sanctuary” and to provide Elected Members with an update on the city’s response to the violent, racist and Islamophobic disorder that was seen over the summer.



Appendix 1: The city's response to the racist and Islamophobic violence in August 2024

Context – outline of response in Sheffield

1. During late July and early August, a number of riots and incidents of racially-motivated and Islamophobic violent disorder took place in towns and cities across England. The violence caused significant levels of fear for very many, particularly those in Black, Asian or other minoritised ethnic communities. Sheffield was fortunate in that it did not experience these riots, and the small number of violent incidents that did occur were comparatively low-level and quickly dealt with. However, there was real concern that Sheffield could experience similar violence. The city – its institutions and communities – came together to address this threat of disorder and to demonstrate solidarity with those affected.

Emergency response

2. An incident management structure was established by Sheffield City Council to oversee response to potential issues to co-ordinate response to the violent disorder and prevent other disorder. This operated within the context of a South Yorkshire-wide multi-agency response, led by South Yorkshire Police, whose intelligence ensured we focused on areas that were of highest risk (Barkers Pool, asylum seeker accommodation, immigration-related facilities). We rapidly engaged the Home Office and accessed additional security support for Sheffield's mosques. The emergency response arrangements remained in place from 5th August to 9th August and was stood down on the afternoon of the 9th when SYP's threat assessment suggested reduced risk. The major incident that had been declared was stood down on 15th August, but SY Police maintained a state of heightened readiness for some time after this.
3. During the course of the incident, SY Police focused on: preventing violence; offering community assurance through neighbourhood policing and visibility; and arresting perpetrators of violence, hate and criminality.
4. In Sheffield, there were two relatively small protests, one on Sunday 4th August, and one in the city centre outside the City Hall on the 7th of August. Although concerning for many in the city, these were not on the same scale of incidents seen elsewhere in the country. SY Police were present with proportionate strength, some local businesses closed temporarily and the crowd were moved on. Amey rapidly removed offensive graffiti, which appeared to represent the views of those protesting against the far-right. Three arrests were made in connection with these gatherings.

Communities

5. Working through the Local Area Committees (LACs), we established conversation spaces with our communities and used our resource to respond to the needs of local communities. Much of the work focused on the Central LAC and East LAC, using LAC channels to communicate messages of reassurance and support, staff teams out in communities being visible and offering reassurance, working with existing local VCF infrastructure, mosques (e.g. targeted reassurance work around Friday prayers) and alongside communities.
6. SYP were proactive in seeking to engage and reassure communities (neighbourhood meetings and walkabouts). SCC's Youth Engagement Team undertook light-touch engagement and reassurance for young people in the city centre and Business Information Officers were out on local high streets, communicating corporate messages to reassure local businesses.
7. The Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise sector led much of the response, doing critically important work to reassure and support communities who felt vulnerable or were concerned about what was happening. This included community groups and those in the faith sector, such as mosques, churches and other faith communities. Voluntary Action Sheffield organised a meeting for women in the week commencing 5th August, which provided much additional reassurance.
8. Much of the above activity was focused on reassurance and support to reduce feelings of fear in communities, bring people together and reduce potential for local incidents.
9. Political leaders from the city council and the South Yorkshire Mayor were proactive in providing clear messaging to support our communities and being unequivocal that hate and racism has no place in our city. This has included:
 - a. Statement from the Leader of the Council, issued on social media on 4th August 2024.
 - b. [Cross Party Joint message](#) via SheffNews on the 8th August committing to address the relevant issues head on and promote equality and peace for residents, and Councillors have attended and chaired events held within communities.
 - c. [Statement from Fatima Khan-Shah](#), Chair of the Race Equality Partnership for Sheffield.
 - d. [Public meeting](#) with the SY Mayor, local community and faith leaders and SY Police to show solidarity in the face of the disorder
 - e. [Statement from the Mayor of SY](#) in anticipation of further protests
10. Through [Strategy and Resources Committee in August](#) and [Full Council in September](#), all four political groups represented on Sheffield City Council made robust statements which recognised and celebrated the city's diversity and our rejection of racism and hate.

Our staff

11. We proactively kept our staff informed of our response to the racially-motivated and Islamophobic violence, seeking to offer reassurance, urging increased vigilance, signposting to our wellbeing support and guidance and recognising the traumatic and triggering impact that the violence would likely have on staff and their families.
12. Working with Fatima Khan-Shah (Chair of the Race Equality Partnership for Sheffield), [we created a safe space session](#) for our workforce on 14th August which was a challenging, powerful and moving sharing of lived experience involving 150 of our people from right across the council. We have committed to building on this conversation with further activity and action.

Positioning with Government

13. Sheffield had strong engagement with MHCLG on our approach to community cohesion.
14. Sheffield is recognised by the MHCLG Cohesion Unit as having real strengths and experience in this space and it is essential that we further develop our strategic positioning and asks ahead of future engagement.

Continuing to work with our communities

15. In the context of racist and Islamophobic incidents elsewhere in the country, Sheffield's communities stood together against hate and prejudice. We need to continue to work closely with our communities, with partners and the new Race Equality Partnership for Sheffield to continue our journey to becoming an anti-racist city.
16. The strength of Sheffield's communities is one of our city's greatest assets and as the main report above emphasises, a shared, long-term vision for communities that is developed with our communities is a vital step to build resilience and maximise those collective strengths.

Appendix 2: response to the Full Council resolution on reaffirming Sheffield as a City of Sanctuary

Original Council Motion - [Agenda item - Notice of Motion Regarding "Reaffirming Sheffield as a City of Sanctuary" - Given By Councillor Alexi Dimond And To Be Seconded By Councillor Maleiki Haybe | Sheffield City Council](#)

1. Response to the Resolution

On 5th July 2023 the Council carried a motion regarding "Reaffirming Sheffield as a City of Sanctuary". An update against each of the resolutions as carried, is provided as follows:

The Council resolved to:

- (i) **sign the 'Fight the Anti-Refugee Laws' pledge and join the "Lift the Ban" coalition;**

Following the Full Council resolution, the Council has signed the "Fight the Anti-Refugee Laws" pledge and joined the "Lift the Ban" coalition. Sheffield City Council is listed as a supporter on the websites of both causes.

- (ii) **use our powers to ensure migrants do not suffer lengthy stays in temporary, sub-standard or far-distant accommodation;**

The Council has limited powers to determine where migrants are placed whilst seeking asylum.

The support and placement of asylum seekers, including the standard and condition of accommodation, is delivered by the Home Office through Asylum Accommodation and Support Services Contracts (AASC). Mears Group have the AASC for North East, Yorkshire and Humberside. The AASC requires accommodation providers to consult local authorities regarding property proposed for use, in order that requests, (in conjunction with strategic partners), can be considered on their merits.

Over several years, Sheffield City Council's Asylum Team has worked consistently to develop a positive relationship with colleagues from the Home Office and Mears based on open dialogue and robust, honest conversations. Sheffield has been seen as an exemplar with Home Office colleagues seeking to learn from the Sheffield approach to data and intelligence.

Nationally, over 150 contingency hotel sites have now closed, and to complete closure of the national hotel estate and reduce cost, Government have an increased drive to accommodate people seeking asylum within communities. The Full Dispersal Plan is the approach being taken to achieve this, and the number of bedspaces required for people seeking asylum is continually under review.

The Council will continue to seek to work positively with the Home Office and Mears, but to also hold them accountable for their responsibilities under the AASC and to ensure they are aware of the impact of dispersal on existing communities.

- (iii) ask the Chief Executive to make representations to HM Government expressing this Council's deep concern about the impact of the new housing regulations;**

Since July 2024 there has been a change in national Government and therefore the position in terms of any new regulations in this regard has changed.

- (iv) request that the Housing Policy Committee considers adding to its work programme an item on Council powers and resources to protect migrants from discriminatory housing regulations, upholding locally defined standards and inspection processes;**

The last Government proposed the removal of houses in multiple occupation (HMO) regulations for landlords accommodating asylum seekers in their properties. People who are not seeking asylum would still have been entitled to access those safeguards. The last Government argued that by removing the requirement for landlords to abide by HMO regulations, officials could increase the pool of housing available to accommodate asylum seekers. Under the proposed changes, landlords of asylum seekers in England and Wales would no longer have to register with local authorities. These proposals have now been withdrawn.

Housing Policy Committee received the Council's Response to the Government Consultation on Safe and Legal Routes Cap in January 2024. A Review of Private Housing Standards Intervention and Enforcement Policy and a revised Intervention and Enforcement Policy was agreed by Housing Committee in March 2024.

- (v) call on the Government to withdraw the UK-Rwanda agreement, repeal the Nationality and Borders Act and Illegal Migration Bill;**

Since July 2024 there has been a change in national Government and therefore the position in terms of any new regulations in this regard has changed.

The UK Government has cancelled the Rwanda agreement since coming to office in July 2024.

The Illegal Migration Act 2023 was amended in July 2024, to reintroduce processing of asylum claims from those arriving via 'irregular' routes. This will enable successful claimants to be granted right to remain, although the Act itself has not been repealed.

- (vi) call on the Government to recognise the impact of climate change as a legitimate reason to seek safety;**

Since July 2024 there has been a change in national Government and therefore the position in terms of any new regulations in this regard has changed.

- (vii) reaffirm our status as a City of Sanctuary, and work with the Local Authorities of Sanctuary network to ensure we are meeting the accreditation criteria;**

Sheffield City Council was the first Council to make a pledge of support to be a City of Sanctuary. The Council is working with the Local Authorities of Sanctuary network

to ensure it meets the criteria for accreditation and achieve Local Authority of Sanctuary status and the committee's support for this work is requested. A number of actions are being taken to progress this work, as set out in the "Future Actions" section below.

The Sheffield approach to all people seeking sanctuary, is to facilitate and support welcome, reduce barriers to services and where possible, mitigate the impact of national policy to create a welcoming environment.

The Council's Asylum and Migration Team work as the 'glue' and interface for those working to support those seeking sanctuary in the city, providing clear leadership, operational capacity and accountability.

They strive to develop, nurture and maintain good quality, cross-sector partnerships at local, regional and national level. They work directly where they can, to support those seeking sanctuary, but also, actively look for 'levers' where they can influence, either organisationally, or collectively with partners on behalf of the city.

They work to support inclusivity, empowering individuals and families to become part of our Sheffield community. In turn, this supports the City's ambitions regarding social and economic progress, fairness and cohesion.

(viii) call on the Government to set a clear target for processing future asylum claims;

Since July 2024 there has been a change in national Government and therefore the position in terms of any new regulations in this regard has changed.

(ix) call on the Government to ensure that families who have children settled in schools are no longer required to move accommodation;

Since July 2024 there has been a change in national Government and therefore the position in terms of any new regulations in this regard has changed.

(x) investigate ways to fund advice to asylum seekers which was previously delivered by the Sheffield Law Centre;

A number of ways to support advice to asylum seekers are being explored. These are outlined in the future actions set out below.

(xi) work in partnership with organisations and people with lived experience of the asylum system to identify strategies for mitigating the adverse effects of government policies within Sheffield;

As outlined above, a number of future actions have been identified to support those seeking asylum in the city. These are set out below.

(xii) introduce a Councillor 'Migrant Champion' who would:-

(A) be a point of contact for migrants, community groups and organisations to raise concerns;

(B) seek to ensure council services are open and available to migrants who need them; and

(C) seek to make sure the needs of vulnerable migrants are met; and

Councillor Nabeela Mowlana has been appointed as “Migrant Champion” for Sheffield City Council.

(xiii) requests that the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee considers adding to its work programme consideration of the Council’s relationship with the Home Office and immigration enforcement, and an assessment of its current practices and the impact of the Hostile Environment policy on inclusion, equality and cohesion in Sheffield.

As per the response to (ii) above the Council will continue to seek to work positively with the Home Office and Mears, but to also hold them accountable for their responsibilities under the AASC and to ensure they are aware of the impact of dispersal on existing communities. Given the change in national Government there are potential changes to the approach to asylum. An assessment will be made once any future changes are fully understood.

2. Future Actions

A number of actions are being delivered as follows:

- A City Council led Strategic Refugee, Asylum & Migration Group was established in 2023 as the vehicle for a citywide approach to responding effectively to the needs of asylum and other sanctuary groups. This includes statutory, non-statutory and Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector (VCFS) partners who discuss relevant issues of various size and scale.

Subgroups exist to progress specific workstreams, specifically:

- Health
- Accommodation
- Education
- Developing work with Education, to narrow the disparity of offer and provision for school age children between those arriving via different routes.
- Working with Housing to ensure sanctuary is recognised in the Sheffield Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and to help inform the flow of people receiving positive status and the impact on accommodation demand in Sheffield.
- Continuing work with Public Health and relevant partners to take forward recommendations from a recent Health Needs Assessment for people seeking sanctuary.
- Using business intelligence to help forecast future service demand and respond effectively.



- Commissioning an independent review of the impact of support for people on the asylum journey in Sheffield within the next 6 months.
- Developing a Commissioning Framework to inform effective, intelligence informed expenditure of Asylum Dispersal Funding to inform the spending plan for 25/26.
- Further development of GIS mapping capability to support a Place Based approach to understanding the impact of asylum and wider sanctuary in Sheffield and inform decision making.
- Developing a pioneering partnership with Northern College to deliver support to people from arrival in Sheffield, prior to decision regards their status within the next 6 months.
- Continue work to achieve Local Authority of Sanctuary for Sheffield City Council within the next 6 months.

