

Council Meeting – 6th December 2023

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

Name of Questioner	Question	Relevant Policy Committee Chair(s)
Hilary Smith	<p>I asked a question at the recent Strategy and Resources Policy Committee about the steps that the Council could take to reduce its complicity with Israel's system of apartheid and ethnic cleansing. In response, the Leader of the Council told me what he thought the Council was unable to do.</p> <p>What he did not do was to tell me what steps he thought that the Council could take to reduce its financial relationship with companies or institutions that support, directly or indirectly, Israel's system of apartheid.</p> <p>The Council is aware of the United Nations database of companies that operate in or otherwise support Israeli settlements, all illegal under international law. Will the Council commit to investigating, as a matter of urgency, whether it has any financial relationship with any of those companies, directly or indirectly, and make that information public?</p> <p>Secondly, if the Council concludes that it is unable to disengage from financial relationships with any of these companies, will the Council make that information public? Sheffield residents have a right to know if the Council's business make it complicit with Israeli apartheid and a right to know if the law explicitly prevents the Council from ending those financial relationships.</p> <p>Thirdly, the Leader did not respond, at Strategy and Resources Committee, to my question about whether the Council would change its bank from Barclays. Will the Leader now answer that question?</p> <p><i>Answers were provided at the meeting and the webcast and minutes (when published) can be found here:</i></p> <p>Agenda for Council on Wednesday 6 December 2023, 2.00 pm Sheffield City Council</p>	Cllr Tom Hunt (Leader of the Council & Chair of Strategy and Resources Policy Committee)

Val Johnson	<p>I noted the comments of the Leader at the last full Council meeting, which I attended, when he referred to the need for the city to come together and there to be unity. I am also aware of some individuals attempting to characterise marches and rallies which take place in solidarity with the Palestinian people as 'hate marches'. The marches and rallies which have been taking place in our city have been a model of everything which makes me proud to live in Sheffield. Far from being marches of hate, they have included people of all ages, including many families, people from Christian, Jewish, Muslim and secular backgrounds, and included speakers from many diverse backgrounds.</p> <p>We are united not because we are on one side or the other, but because we believe in human rights, international law, and justice for all, and we will not stay silent whilst the Palestinian people are being oppressed by a military occupation and ethnic cleansing of the most brutal kind.</p> <p>My question is to ask members of this Council if they will attend a rally, listen to the speakers, and then reflect on their responsibilities to defend human rights and to uphold international law.</p> <p><i>An answer was provided at the meeting and the webcast and minutes (when published) can be found here:</i></p> <p>Agenda for Council on Wednesday 6 December 2023, 2.00 pm Sheffield City Council</p>	Cllr Tom Hunt (Leader of the Council & Chair of Strategy and Resources Policy Committee)
Annie O’Gara	<p><i>Context: Sheffield was the first Local Authority in the UK to declare itself an Apartheid Free Zone in 1981 in the days of South African Apartheid – The Council members took a bold, principled stance against this crime, creating a reputation for Sheffield that is celebrated to this day.</i></p> <p>In the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee of November 20th, I asked a question arising from the Council’s resolution of November 1st, regarding the Sheffield Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid.</p> <p>In response, the Leader promised that “<i>officers will prepare a thorough report for consideration by the Strategy and Resources Committee,</i>” following which a “<i>recommendation</i>” will be made to the Committee.</p> <p>The Leader also said that he himself would meet the Coalition and he would tell Leaders of other Parties details of that meeting, with “<i>no expectations on them whether they want to attend.</i>” He added that he himself would read the material submitted by the Coalition and he would “<i>circulate</i>” it to others – presumably with no</p>	Cllr Tom Hunt (Leader of the Council & Chair of Strategy and Resources Policy Committee)

expectation that they would read it. (The materials comprise our launch pamphlet and the Executive Summary of Amnesty International's report "Israeli Apartheid against Palestinians: a cruel system of domination and a crime against humanity")

Questions:-

- **Will the report by Officers on this issue, including the recommendation(s), be given to the Coalition in advance of the relevant Strategy and Resources Policy Committee meeting in the New Year?**

- **Are we correct in interpreting the Leader's words as meaning the following:-**
 - That he will be the one and only officer or elected member who commits to meeting the Coalition
 - That he places no expectation on anyone else to join him in that discussion, or even to read succinct materials on an important citizens' movement and on Israel's Crime against Humanity of Apartheid.
 - That the Council's Strategy and Resources Committee will rely on a report and recommendation by officers only, whilst elected members have no responsibility to engage with this city's response to Apartheid, as their predecessors in 1981 did?

- **If we are correct in our interpretation of his words, will the Leader now assure us that any meeting between the Council and the Coalition reflects the magnitude of the moral and legal issues involved by guaranteeing that this meeting isn't marginalised, as his words suggest?**

- **Lastly, has the Chief Executive sent a letter to the Government, as resolved on November 1st?**
 - We request both a copy of that letter to the Government and a copy of any reply received.
 - How has the Chief Executive enacted what she was clearly asked to do by the City Council?

	<p>Answers were provided at the meeting and the webcast and minutes (when published) can be found here:</p> <p>Agenda for Council on Wednesday 6 December 2023, 2.00 pm Sheffield City Council</p> <p><i>(NOTE: When answering the above questions at the meeting, the Leader of the Council had stated that no response had yet been received from the Government to the letter sent by the Council’s Chief Executive conveying the resolution passed by the Council on 1st November. After that answer had been given at the meeting, it was subsequently discovered that a response had been received on the matter within the Chief Executive’s office, by way of a written hard copy letter from the Minister of State for the Middle East. The Leader had not been made aware of the letter at the point that he gave the answer in the full Council meeting.</i></p> <p><i>In order to clarify this reporting error, an addendum will be added to the minutes of the meeting, and both letters have been published on the website - Agenda for Council on Wednesday 1 November 2023, 2.00 pm Sheffield City Council - attached to the Resolution on “Stopping Genocide in Gaza”.)</i></p>	
Simon Jenkins	<p>Regarding the reduction of the MUGA at Hillsborough Park to enable a new “proposed activity hub and cafe”. What consultation was taken place on this? There was a petition against, with 2000 signatures taken by Friends of Hillsborough Park who have now disbanded due to the lack of support from the Council. Also, were relevant local businesses, such as already operating cafes, consulted? Also were groups who rely on MUGA, such as Friends2gether, taken into consideration, as they were clearly not consulted?</p> <p>An answer was provided at the meeting and the webcast and minutes (when published) can be found here:</p> <p>Agenda for Council on Wednesday 6 December 2023, 2.00 pm Sheffield City Council</p>	Cllr Richard Williams (Chair of Communities, Parks and Leisure Policy Committee)