

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – 6TH DECEMBER 2023

RESOLUTIONS PASSED AT THE MEETING

1. SHEFFIELD'S DIVERSE COMMUNITIES STANDING TOGETHER

RESOLVED: That this Council:-

(a) notes:-

- (i) Sheffield's cultural and religious diversity – we are a growing and diverse city with around 120 languages spoken and people from a range of backgrounds living and contributing to every part of the city; our diversity is part of what makes Sheffield such an amazing place;
- (ii) our heritage as the UK's first City of Sanctuary and pride in offering a welcoming home to people seeking safety, demonstrated in how we've welcomed those affected by the war in Ukraine and in welcoming refugees who have fled previous wars including in Chile, Somalia, Kashmir, Burma, Palestine and Yemen, among many other countries;
- (iii) that in developing our City Goals, our communities have shown how much they value Sheffield's diversity and its people; celebrating and respecting histories, heritage and cultures and finding common ground is embedded in the draft Goals;
- (iv) that Equality, Diversity and Inclusion will be a central feature of the new Council Plan;
- (v) the progress that has been made, together with partners, on implementing the recommendations of the Race Equality Commission, and the importance of holding course towards the aim of being an anti-racist city;
- (vi) the contributions of many diverse communities to the UK, in particular, the service of millions of Christians, Hindus, Muslims, Jews, those of no faith, LGBTQ+ and others, in defeating the evil of the Nazis in the Second World War and upholding the values of civil rights, democracy and rule of law;
- (vii) that all our residents, no matter their nationality, call this local authority their home and enrich Sheffield;
- (viii) that the Council estimates that up to 750 refugees could be affected by the Streamlined Asylum Process up to 15th December, which may put them at risk of homelessness; and

- (ix) that denying people seeking asylum the right to work is dehumanising for the individual and harmful for the economy;
- (b) believes:-
- (i) that this Council stands with all our communities in their rights to live peacefully and safely and will continue to do everything it can to bring communities together;
 - (ii) diversity in representation makes for good decision-making;
 - (iii) it is important that all elected bodies and political parties take steps to ensure that political representation reflects the diversity within the communities that they represent, particularly ensuring that people with protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation) are supported to play a full part in the democratic process;
 - (iv) that even in difficult circumstances, Sheffield's communities have shown amazing strength and unity, standing together to be kind and support one another; as they did 12 months ago, when the Stannington gas and water emergency turned people's lives upside down, and we saw community groups, businesses, and local politicians including the late Councillor Vickie Priestley, working hard for each other;
 - (v) that our city provides the perfect stage for celebrating diversity, bringing people together into our city centre, local high streets and public spaces to celebrate, respect and learn about our cultures; next year this includes celebrating the Lunar/Chinese New Year of the Dragon, Easter, Eid-al-Fitr and our whole calendar of cultural events from Pride to Black History Month;
 - (vi) that our city is delighted to welcome the MOBO Awards, the UK's biggest celebration of Black music and culture, to Sheffield in February 2024;
 - (vii) every Sheffield resident should have equal democratic rights and be able to vote in our local elections; and
 - (viii) all Sheffield residents and members of all communities have a right to shelter, security, warmth and sustenance; and
- (c) resolves to:-
- (i) raise the alarm locally about the refugee homelessness crisis and request the Housing Policy Committee to engage with VCS, faith groups, universities and housing providers to urgently discuss this;
 - (ii) request the Chair of the Housing Policy Committee to write to the Government to demand a fully resourced national homelessness prevention programme;

- (iii) promote the right to vote and democratic participation opportunities to all communities in Sheffield through cultural-sensitive approaches such as:-
 - (A) delivering training to councillors and officers on the changes brought by the Elections Act;
 - (B) working collaboratively with the VCS to reach residents about current voter eligibility rules and how to vote; and
 - (C) promoting voter registration and photo ID requirements to residents;
- (iv) encourage all councillors to attend the launch of the local “Lift the Ban” campaign in the Town Hall on December 15th;
- (v) encourage communities, partners and Councillors to support the development of the city’s new Cohesion Framework, taking its lead from the City Goals, so that we have a shared approach for respecting and supporting each other now and for the long term; and
- (vi) wish everyone a belated happy Diwali, and Happy Hanukkah, Happy Christmas and Happy New Year.

2. 13 YEARS OF CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT FAILURE

RESOLVED: That this Council:-

- (a) notes that:-
 - (i) Sheffield City Council has been hammered since 2010, first by the Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition and now by the Conservatives;
 - (ii) Sheffield Council has almost 30% or £856 per household less to spend in real terms, compared to 2010/11, and further notes that this massive cut is well above the national average of 20% or £581 per dwelling;
 - (iii) some wealthy councils like Surrey have only seen a reduction of 8%;
 - (iv) when you take out local taxation, the cut in funding for Sheffield is approximately 50% in real terms since 2010/11;
 - (v) the most intense cuts happened to Local Government during the Coalition years of 2010-15;

- (vi) Labour is not proposing any additional funding for local government, with Shadow Local Government Minister, Sarah Owen MP, quoted in the Manchester Evening News saying “the party does not want to talk about extra funding”;
- (vii) in a speech on Monday, Sir Keir Starmer advised that Labour will not “turn on the spending taps”, arguing that austerity might not be just a “choice” after all;
- (viii) the webpage containing the 10 pledges based on the “moral case for socialism” used in Kier Starmer’s leadership election has been taken down, and the pledges themselves largely reversed;
- (ix) Kier Starmer praised Margaret Thatcher in the Sunday Telegraph for bringing “meaningful change” and seeking “to drag Britain out of its stupor by setting loose our natural entrepreneurialism”; and
- (x) austerity has failed on its own terms as national debt has increased along with poverty and inequality, while public services have been decimated to the brink of failure or beyond;

(b) believes that:-

- (i) the Autumn Statement lifted the lid on 13 years of Conservative economic failure with growth revised down for 2024, 2025 and 2026;
- (ii) real wages are set to fall, we will see the biggest hit to living standards on record, and taxes have risen;
- (iii) yet again, the Conservatives failed to help with any of the challenges that councils like Sheffield face, with local authorities left picking up the pieces of years of underinvestment in health and social care, homelessness, and housing;
- (iv) just as public services face more cuts, it is shameful that the Rt. Hon. Lord David Cameron is back in the Cabinet after the damage his Government caused to our city and the country;
- (v) despite the Conservatives holding us back, Sheffield is a city on the up; we are setting out ambitious plans for economic growth, delivering massive regeneration projects, building thousands more affordable homes, and restoring our public transport network;
- (vi) we could do so much more if we had stable, long-term funding; and
- (vii) Keir Starmer has made it clear that he “won’t turn on spending taps” if Labour win the next general election, and Labour do not have policies which will address the scale of the problems the UK faces;

(c) resolves to:-

- (i) unlike the Conservatives and Labour, always manage every pound of public money wisely;
- (ii) do everything we can to protect public services that people rely on, grow the local economy, and secure more investment;
- (iii) call on every member of the Council to condemn the successive governments since 2010 for the damage they have done to Sheffield;
- (iv) call on members of the Council to represent their electors according to their best judgment, instead of condemning policies they are about to adopt;
- (v) request the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee to consider placing on its work programme consideration of every opportunity for investing in renewable energy projects on Council land and buildings to generate energy and income; and
- (vi) requests the Chief Executive to write to both Keir Starmer and Rishi Sunak, calling for:-
 - (A) remove the two child cap on benefits, and to raise Universal Credit by £40; and
 - (B) proper funding of a Green New Deal, education, emergency services, health and legal services;
- (d) is disappointed that the Labour Group seem to be more interested in national politics rather than presenting Notices of Motions that deal with issues that affect the communities of Sheffield, including the cost of living crisis, rising energy costs and fuel poverty, and the decimation of public transport, but is not really surprised when the direction of the Labour Group in Sheffield is being driven by the Labour Party nationally through the imposed Campaign Improvement Board;
- (e) is astounded that at the same time that the Labour Group are criticising the Conservative Governments of the last 13 years, Sir Kier Starmer is singing the praises of Margaret Thatcher's role as Prime Minister, on the approach to the 40th Anniversary in 2024 of the devastating Miners' Strike of 1984-85, when, in this Council's belief, her governments wreaked havoc on the steel and coal mining industries that impacted on the jobs and wellbeing of thousands of Sheffield residents, and destroyed the public transport system that was the envy of the country, and with the impacts of this still being felt today; and
- (f) does not agree with Sir Kier Starmer's comments, nor thinks that they are reflected across the country, nor by members of our communities here in Sheffield.

3. OPPOSING MINIMUM SERVICE LEVELS

RESOLVED: That this Council:-

(a) notes:-

- (i) the right to strike is a fundamental British freedom which is protected by international law; this can be seen in the Human Rights Act, Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights, the International Labour Organisation's Convention 87 and Article 6(4) of the European Social Charter;
- (ii) the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023 sets out that when employees in relevant sectors democratically vote to strike they can be required to work and sacked if they don't comply;
- (iii) that the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023 exposes Trade Unions to being liable to pay damages of up to £1 million, and forces Trade Unions to act as enforcement agents on behalf of employers and the government;
- (iv) the Joint Committee on Human Rights has expressed concern that this legislation is not compatible with the UK's commitments to human rights for workers and trade union members; and
- (v) the Regulatory Policy Committee has determined that the impact assessment for this Bill was 'not fit for purpose';

(b) believes:-

- (i) the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023 is a direct attack on the right to strike fundamental freedom;
- (ii) that consecutive Conservative Governments have been carrying out brutal attacks on trade unions for decades, culminating with this most recent attack on the right to strike;
- (iii) that this Government, instead of tackling the causes of the cost-of-living crisis, are attempting to cut through the recent wave of strikes by trying to shift the blame from profiteering bosses who have manufactured unsustainable levels of inflation, on to ordinary workers who are exercising their right to fight for dignity and fair pay at work and in their lives;
- (iv) that this Government, instead of developing a unifying vision for national success and shared prosperity, is engaging in a divisive blame game over the state of public services against a movement dominated by political opponents;
- (v) the regime initiated by the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023 is draconian, unnecessary and unworkable;

- (vi) the Act undermines constructive industrial relations and is likely to inflame and prolong disputes;
- (vii) that this Act is a direct attack on the freedoms of the ordinary, hardworking residents of our city;
- (viii) existing anti-union and anti-strike laws introduced since 1979 should be repealed, including bans on secondary picketing, and bans on industrial action for political objectives including climate and ecological justice; and
- (ix) these laws should be replaced with a positive charter of workers' and trade union rights, enshrining the fundamental right to organise and strike, drawn up in consultation with trade unions;

(c) resolves:-

- (i) to ask the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee to consider how the Council will, if it can use provisions in the Act, including the discretion not to issue work notices, continue to protect the rights of its workers to strike and how it should be reflected in our policies, such as the ethical procurement policy;
- (ii) to raise these concerns with all relevant bodies - including the Fire and Rescue Authority, Health boards, and any other relevant bodies with employee status;
- (iii) to work with local unions and our trades council to oppose this legislation together as effectively as possible;
- (iv) to welcome the Liberal Democrat policy "Strengthening the ability of unions to represent workers effectively by broadening the right to collective bargaining in pay and conditions, including pay and pensions, working time and holidays, equality issues, health and safety, training and development, work organisation and the nature and level of staffing.";
- (v) to urge members of the House of Lords to support the motions to reject the Strikes Minimum Service Levels regulations for the Code of Practice for Unions, for the NHS Ambulance Services and NHS Patient Transport Service, for Border Security and Passenger Rail services;
- (vi) to write to the Rt. Hon. Sir Keir Starmer and demand he pledges an incoming Labour government to reverse fines and other measures taken against any union under the terms of the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023; and
- (vii) in so doing, to remind Sir Keir of his leadership election pledge (since deleted) to "Repeal the Trade Union Act. Oppose Tory attacks on the right to take industrial action and the weakening of workplace rights."; and

- (d) resolves to work with trades unions and other relevant bodies to do everything we can to avoid the prospect of work notices being issued, whilst supporting the fundamental right of workers to strike and to fight for dignity and fair pay at work.

4. BANNING SINGLE USE VAPES ON ENVIRONMENTAL AND HEALTH GROUNDS

RESOLVED: That this Council:-

- (a) notes that, in relation to environmental considerations:-
- (i) single-use vapes are a hazard for waste and litter collection and cause fires in bin lorries;
 - (ii) single use vapes are designed as one unit so batteries cannot be separated from the plastic, making them almost impossible to recycle without going through special treatment;
 - (iii) single use vapes are wasteful of critical elements needed in the clean energy transition, with lithium and other critical minerals from vapes discarded in the UK over one year equivalent to 6,200 EV batteries (according to “*The Energy Mix*” news site);
 - (iv) the lithium batteries inside the plastic can sharply increase in temperature if crushed and can become flammable; this comes at a cost to the council taxpayer through fire damage to equipment and the specialist treatment needed to deal with hazardous waste; and
 - (v) with 1.3 million disposable vapes thrown away every week, they have also become a regular and obvious item of litter on our streets;
- (b) notes that, in relation to health considerations:-
- (i) notes Labour's support for a phased smoking ban, increasing the minimum age for buying cigarettes, and its commitment to tackle marketing of vape products to children, and backs their proposals;
 - (ii) the health advice is clear; vaping is never recommended for children, carrying a risk of future harm and addiction, and young people and those who have never smoked should not vape or be encouraged to vape;
 - (iii) there is concern about the impact vaping is having on children and young people; the marketing of vapes with designs and flavours that may appeal to children, in particular those with fruity and bubble gum flavours, and colourful child-friendly packaging, is inappropriate;

- (iv) Sheffield Youth Cabinet have made combating vaping one of their key priorities and have, with regional partners in collaboration with ASH UK, produced a comprehensive toolkit of resources on how to stop children vaping in response to demands from parents and teachers, and reaffirms this Council's support for their work;
 - (v) it is worrying that more and more children – who have never smoked – are starting vaping;
 - (vi) in the past few years, vaping among young people has risen; Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) data shows that 8.6% of 11- to 18-year-olds in England vaped in 2022, compared with 4% in 2021, and the Charity also reported that among those who tried vaping, 40.1% had never smoked before; and
 - (vii) the Local Government Association has called on its members to step up enforcement to deal with growing numbers of shops selling vapes to children despite the 18-age limit, with many “especially concerned” by child-friendly marketing, including colourful packages;
- (c) calls on the Government to ban the marketing of vaping to children and for flavour descriptors and packaging that resemble confectionary, and images and advertisements designed specifically to target and appeal to children and young people, to be prohibited;
- (d) therefore asks the Leader of the Council to write to the Secretary of State asking for single use vapes to be banned and note that, with the EU proposing a ban in 2026 and France rolling out a ban in December 2023, there is a risk that, as markets close, disposable vapes will flood into the UK; and
- (e) notes that the Council Leader and the Chief Executive wrote to Sheffield's MPs on 17th October asking them to support government plans to raise the age of sale for tobacco by one year every year, urging them to pledge their support by voting yes to increasing the age of sale of tobacco, and notes that Labour has reaffirmed that its MPs will support the proposed legislation.

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