

SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

Strategy and Resources Policy Committee

Meeting held 31 May 2022

PRESENT: Councillors Terry Fox (Chair), Julie Grocutt (Deputy Chair), Angela Argenzio, Douglas Johnson, Bryan Lodge, Joe Otten, Mick Rooney, Martin Smith and Richard Williams

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 There were no apologies for absence.

2. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

2.1 No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public and press.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 There were no declarations of interest made.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

4.1 Nigel Slack attended the Committee and asked the following questions which were answered by the Chair:

4.2 **Q1** With the dire prediction for the potential budget crisis for the city's finances, I'd like to ask for some clarification of the reports details.

We must all recognise the problem of the national & international economic crisis that will impact Local authorities as well as households and businesses in the coming months, but specifically:

Do the forecasts in this report include the impact of fuel and energy costs on SCC Budgets?

A: Yes, we have factored into our forecast our view of pressures for energy costs and any mitigations such as reserves for such eventualities.

Do the forecasts include the impacts of poor service from SCC contractors on the financial position? Are there plans to address these problems in performance?

(I'm still trying to sort out a Council Tax exemption problem for a house I sold over 12 months ago - £2500 missing from the treasury for 2021-22. / Business rates income from premises sold 4 years ago that are still unoccupied & therefore presumably currently exempt.)

A: Contract management is important, and SCC takes this role seriously for any supplier we have contracts with. We can look into the specifics of your issue if you would like to share the detail.

Are there plans to approach Government for a relief package, proportionate to the cost pressures, similar to that being offered to households?

A: It's unknown at this stage if LA's will receive any Govt support in-year for such pressure, we are not assuming any further funding in the forecast as it would not be prudent to do so, and we are working with the relevant SCC Committees to manage within current resources. We continue to lobby Government for fair funding for SCC and inflationary increases will be an element of that approach.

Are there plans to approach the new Mayor about the issues and to get his support in squeezing more money out of Government and to address how his allegedly more flexible approach can be used to support both local businesses and therefore SCC? (i.e. support so that businesses can pay business rates rather than avoid them?)

A: We work very closely with South Yorkshire MCA on a number of issues that affect SCC and the region, working across the region to ensure a collaborative approach and to maximise opportunities.

Lastly, does the report enable SCC to extract and discuss the impact of Covid & Brexit measures on the city's finances?

A: There are many factors impacting on SCC's finances, the report does not attempt to identify these individually but focus on how the authority should address the overall impact.

- 4.3 Q2 Both a finance and democracy question next. What is the saving that would be made for SCC by switching to All Out Elections rather than elections by thirds? We have already heard, as part of the Governance Committee's work, that All Out elections are a better fit for Committee decision making than the current election cycle. It would provide stability of committee memberships for 4 years, improve decision making through better experienced Councillors and enable longer term policy planning than currently. It would take Councillors away from the continual fixation on 'electioneering' that typifies the current cycle, with all the antagonism that generates between parties. The only loss would be for the political parties in having to be grown ups for four years. I suspect this is a price the residents would be willing to pay.

Will this committee add a review of the SCC election cycle to their work plan as a matter of urgency, potentially to be sent to the Governance Committee for consideration and research about fitness for the new committee system.

A: In common with most metropolitan districts, Sheffield currently elects a third of its councillors in three out of every four years, with the fourth year 'fallow'. All authorities that elect by thirds have the option to alter their pattern of elections to move to 'all-out elections'. This would mean all councillors being elected at the same time once every four years.

There are benefits and disadvantages to any pattern of election – for example,

electing by thirds gives voters a more frequent opportunity to express their views about the performance of their elected representatives whereas all-out elections arguably promote a more stable political position for a longer period of time.

- 4.4 **Q3** As part of my daily exercise I often spend time in and around the General Cemetery. My route always takes me past Mount Pleasant House and inevitably I am reminded that it is now 4 years since the property was agreed to be sold by SCC for redevelopment into Care Home facilities. In that time nothing appears to have happened, at all, to that building apart from continued dilapidation of a Grade2 heritage asset and undoubtedly a consequent impact on Business Rates for the Council.
I was told by a now departed Councillor that the sale went through in 2021 but I was sceptical.

Who currently owns Mount Pleasant House?

A: The hub and stables are owned by Hermes Care under a 250-year lease from SCC. Contracts for the Agreement for Lease for the main house were exchanged in July 2021 which contractually commits the purchaser to acquiring a lease for this part of the site. The terms of the contract require a number of conditions to be satisfied by the purchaser to ensure that the heritage asset is repaired, and the scheme delivered as originally intended. Once these conditions are satisfied the lease will complete and ownership will transfer to the purchaser Hermes Care. Under the terms of the contract Hermes are currently managing the site.

What planning permission still exists, if any was ever granted?

A: An application for planning permission has not yet been submitted. Discussions are currently underway and this is one of the conditions to be satisfied for the completion of the lease for the House.

What is SCC doing to ensure the integrity of this Grade2 listed building?

A: There are conditions in the agreement for lease relating to planning and repair of the building. The agreement for lease requires that the main building is refurbished and brought into use before or at the same time as any new building/extension works. SCC as landlord and planning authority will sign off any proposals before they are undertaken to ensure that these are sympathetic to the listed building and secure its long term future.

- 4.5 **Q4** The Seven Principles of Public Life are embedded in the SCC Constitution.
<https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/documents/s52082/Part%205A%20-%20Councillor%20Code%20of%20Conduct%202022.pdf>
Appendix A – SCC Constitution – Part 5 – Pg 244

Will this committee confirm that they hold these principles to be a core part of the way SCC works, despite the pressures from local 'Business Leaders' and 'some' Councillors' to water these down for one specific individual?

A: This a question for the committee that needs to be answered without specific

reference to any individual or case in hand

5. RETIREMENT OF STAFF

5.1 The Executive Director, Resources submitted a report on Council staff retirements.

5.2 **RESOLVED:** That Strategy and Resources Policy Committee:-

(a) places on record its appreciation of the valuable services rendered to the City Council by the following staff in the Portfolios below:-

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Post</u> | <u>Years' Service</u> |
|----------------------|---|-----------------------|
| <u>Place</u> | | |
| Howard Baxter | Principal Planning Officer | 32 |
| Jill Hurst | Head of Service - Investment and Maintenance | 38 |
| Zoe Mair | Principal Planning Officer - Conservation and Design | 39 |
| Brian Messider | Principal Planning Officer - Access | 29 |
| Glenn Walker | Responsive Repairs Team Leader, Housing Repairs Service | 44 |
| Craig Wild | Compliance Champion Electrician | 38 |
| <u>People</u> | | |
| Julie Farrell | Deputy Head, Lydgate Junior School | 42 |
| Julie Pheasey | Clerical Officer, Pipworth Community Primary School | 21 |

6. WORK PROGRAMME

6.1 The Director of Legal and Governance presented the Work Programme and informed Committee that this would be a regular item and although it contained suggestions for what it may contain, it was up to the Committee to decide. Appendix 3 of the report contained the actual work programme which would be visible to the public.

6.2 Councillor Rooney asked a question regarding member consultation on the Bi Monthly disposal list and it was confirmed that consultation with local members

would take place as previously, with the list coming to Committee for approval.

6.3 Councillor Johnson commented that the 10 Point Climate Change Plan spanned all policy committees and that climate change monitoring should feature on all the work programmes.

6.4 Councillor Grocutt agreed and noted that climate change would be included within the Local Plan and there was a need to understand how climate change monitoring would work across all policy committees.

6.5 **RESOLVED** that:-

1. With reference to issues raised in this report, consideration be given to any further additions or adjustments to the work programme presented at Appendix 3 of the report;
2. That the committee's work programme as set out in Appendix 3 of the report be agreed; and
3. Consideration be given to any further issues to be explored by officers for inclusion in part 6 of the next work programme report, for potential addition to the work programme.

7. OUR SHEFFIELD: THE YEAR AHEAD

7.1 The Director of Policy, Performance and Communications presented the report which provided the Committee with an overview of the Council's financial, policy and operating context. The report set out the key issues and opportunities facing the authority over the coming year.

The report also set out a proposed approach for the development of a Corporate Plan, with an intention of bringing forward a draft of the plan to the Strategy and Resources Committee in September 2022.

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

1. Note the financial, policy and operating context set out in this report, and the risks and opportunities identified therein;
2. Agree to receive further reports on these issues as required, whilst noting that the primary responsibility for responding to these issues will lie with the relevant policy committee;
3. Agree the proposal to develop a statement of policy priorities for the year ahead and to hold a meeting of the Strategy and Resources Urgency Committee to consider and agree this;
4. Note the importance of developing a Corporate Plan for the organisation and to note the work already done to engage with staff across the council

on this;

5. Agree to holding a series of Member workshops as set out in paragraphs 25 and 26 of the report to help develop the content of the Corporate Plan; and
6. Agree to receive and consider a draft of the Corporate Plan at its meeting on 30 August in advance of a final report being considered by Full Council.

7.3 **Reasons for Decision**

- 7.3.1 The proposals set out in the report will help contribute to set a clear direction for the organisation for the forthcoming year, and through the development of the Corporate Plan, beyond. They will help to ensure that the organisation stays focused on key objectives whilst responding to the changing context within which it is working. In turn this will ensure that the council continues to place the wellbeing of the people of Sheffield and the communities in which they live at the heart of its decision-making.

7.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

- 7.4.1 Two alternative options were considered:

- Producing a Corporate Plan for discussion at the Strategy and Resources Committee in July. This was discounted on the basis that it would leave insufficient time for engagement with Members, staff or other stakeholders.
- Not producing a Corporate Plan at all. This was discounted on the basis that the policy, financial and operating context for the organisation was such that not having a clear statement of direction, objective and priorities would have a significant detrimental impact on the organisation's ability to operate effectively.

8. **MONTH 1 MONITORING, FINANCIAL POSITION AND BUDGET TIMETABLE**

- 8.1 The Director of Finance and Commercial Services presented the report which brought the Committee up to date with the Council's financial position as at Month 1, 2022/23. The report also sought the Committee's agreement to a proposed budget timetable for the development of the 2023/24 budget.

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

1. Note the Council's challenging financial position;
2. Confirm that *"It is the responsibility of each Committee to work within the budget framework agreed by Council. This includes taking timely action to address any overspend within the services for which the Committee is responsible."* As agreed by Full Council on 23 March 2022;
3. Note that the Finance Sub-Committee on 7 June will receive more detailed budget monitoring;

4. Note that each Policy Committee will receive more detailed budget monitoring for their areas of responsibility at their meetings in June 2022;
5. Requires any Policy Committee that is forecasting an overspend on their budget to develop an action plan to address the overspend in-year and ask the Finance Sub-Committee to monitor both the development of any required action plans and delivery against them;
6. Approve the budget timetable set out in 1.5.1 of the report; and
7. Note that each Policy Committee will be advised of the budget timetable at their June 2022 meetings including the requirement for each Policy Committee to plan to develop budget proposals over the course of the summer

8.3 Reasons for Decision

- 8.3.1 The recommendations in the report will ensure that the Council has a robust budget process for 2023/24 and will ensure that each Policy Committee undertakes any work required to both balance their 2022/23 budget and prepare for the 2023/24 budget.

8.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected

- 8.4.1 The Council is required to both set a balance budget and to ensure that in-year income and expenditure are balanced. No other alternatives were considered.

9. SUPPORTING SHEFFIELDERS THROUGH THE COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS

- 9.1 The Director of Policy, Performance and Communications presented the report which set out how the cost-of-living crisis is having profound implications for people across Sheffield and the steps that Sheffield City Council and partners in the public and voluntary, community and faith (VCF) sector have taken to provide support and advice to those who are being most impacted.

The report proposed that the Council urgently establish a cross-partner incident management approach to the cost-of-living crisis, learning from the strength of our whole city response to Covid-19. This would include the establishment of a strategic response group ('Gold'), chaired by the Leader of the Council, that will bring together relevant Committee Chairs, SCC officers and representatives from across Sheffield's public, private and VCF sector. This group would set out and direct Sheffield's overall response to supporting communities through the cost of living crisis.

This 'Gold' command group will be supported by a 'Silver' (tactical) group who would have responsibility for coordinating planning and activity in support of the overall strategy developed by the Gold group. This group would meet frequently and set out an operational plan to respond to the cost-of-living challenges facing the city.

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

1. Note the work that has been done on a cross-partner basis to date to help the people of Sheffield respond to the cost-of-living crisis, as described at paragraph 7 of the report, including supporting the work of South Yorkshire Community Foundation to establish a new fund to support people with the cost-of-living crisis;
2. Agree to establish an incident response arrangement to help the city respond to the current situation and prepare for the forthcoming autumn and winter period, including the establishment of a strategic-level 'Gold' group to be chaired by the Leader of the Council and a 'Silver' partner group led by a senior SCC officer;
3. Ask all policy committees at their first meetings to consider nomination of an Elected Member to sit on a cross-party Gold group;
4. Agree that partner organisations should be invited to join the Gold group, recognising that the cost-of-living crisis demands a whole-city response across the public, private and VCF sectors; and
5. Agree to receive a report at its July meeting setting out a proposed strategy and action plan for addressing the cost-of-living crisis in Sheffield, which should include proposals around the utilisation of the Food Action Plan fund established as part of the 2022/23 budget, along with updates on the social isolation and volunteering funds.

9.3 **Reasons for Decision**

- 9.3.1 To establish a cross-partner incident management approach to the cost-of-living crisis, learning from the strength of our whole city response to Covid-19.

9.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

- 9.4.1 To not do anything, this was rejected as through the services and support Sheffield City Council delivers directly and with our partners in the public and VCF sector, we are working alongside the people and communities across the city who are most exposed and suffering the consequences of the cost-of-living crisis.

10. GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE LOCAL PLAN

- 10.1 The Service Manager Strategic Planning presented the report which sought agreement on the governance arrangements for overseeing work on Sheffield's emerging Local Plan (the 'Sheffield Plan').

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

1. Owing to its cross-cutting nature, the Strategy & Resources Committee should have overall responsibility for the Sheffield Plan;

2. Due to the level of work involved in producing the Sheffield Plan, responsibility for overseeing development of it should be delegated to the Transport, Regeneration and Climate Change Policy Committee; and
3. The Sheffield Plan Member Working Group should be re-established under the committee system of governance to enable it to continue to play a key advisory role on the content of the Plan and provide regular progress reports to the Transport, Regeneration and Climate Change Policy Committee

10.3 Reasons for Decision

- 10.3.1 The cross-cutting nature and significance of the Sheffield Plan for the future development of the city means that it is appropriate for the Strategy & Resources Policy Committee to take overall responsibility for the Plan. However, delegation to the Transport, Regeneration and Climate Change Policy Committee reflects the level of work required from Members to progress the Plan and the relative capacities of the two Policy Committees.
- 10.3.2 Continuing the Sheffield Plan Member Working Group will allow officers to obtain a regular political steer on various matters relating to the content of the Sheffield Plan. The Group will have no decision-making powers. The Strategy and Resources Policy Committee can be kept up to date on progress and will have ultimate responsibility for deciding whether to support the Publication Draft Plan and refer it to full Council for final approval.

10.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected

- 10.4.1 An alternative option would be for officers to seek a political steer on specific matters relating to the Sheffield Plan directly from either the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee or the Transport, Regeneration and Climate Change Policy Committee. However, the Strategy and Resources Committee only meets monthly and the Transport, Regeneration and Climate Change Policy Committee every 2 months. It would cause considerable delay to the Sheffield Plan timetable if each issue under consideration had to be reported to one of the formal Policy Committees.
- 10.4.2 A further option would be to formally establish a Task and Finish Group for either the Strategy & Resources Policy Committee or the Transport, Regeneration and Climate Change Policy Committee. However, under Council Procedure Rules at 25.2, a Policy Committee is only able to have one Task and Finish Group operating at any one time. Having a Task and Finish Group for the Local Plan would effectively limit the scope to have a Group working on other matters for a considerable period.