

# SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

## POLICY COMMITTEE DECISION RECORD

The following decisions were taken on Wednesday 12 July 2023 by the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee.

### Item No

#### **8. SUPPORTING THE PEOPLE OF SHEFFIELD THROUGH THE COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS**

8.1 The Director of Policy and Democratic Engagement submitted a report that provides an update on the cross-partner response to the Cost-of-Living Crisis. It summarises the support we have put in place to date and how we have implemented the action plan and recommendations agreed by this committee in previous reports in May and July 2022.

The report makes recommendations relating to how we can learn from and build on the work already done to continue to support communities with the challenges ahead. Including plans to:

- Invest £400,000 across the LACs, ringfenced to address the cost-of-living crisis
- Build on our Welcome Places model to support communities across the city
- Arm frontline staff with the information they need to link communities with the right support when they need it
- Make it easier for the people who need it most to access £10.4 million Household Support Fund and other hardship support over the coming year
- Improve access to food using £150,000 of South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority funding to support food banks -and community pantries in our neighbourhoods.

The report outlines our approach to planning for the upcoming winter, data insights about the continuing impacts of Cost-of-Living crisis on our city and how this work can contribute to a long-term, strategic plan to prevent and reduce poverty and inequality in Sheffield.

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

(a) notes the approach and work undertaken to respond to the Cost-of-Living Crisis to date, in line with the strategy agreed by Strategy and Resources Committee, and approve a continuation of the cross-partner incident response arrangement and governance structure;

(b) notes the insights from our data dashboard and the latest available research, what it tells us about the impact of the Cost-of-Living Crisis across Sheffield and the likely impact over the year ahead;

(c) agrees the approach to planning for the winter ahead, including plans to develop and sustain welcome places, learn lessons from the past year and build on the infrastructure we've put in place;

(d) agrees that Strategy and Resources Committee will receive further updates on the response; and

(e) notes that the funding for the Cost-of-Living Support Hub ends in March 2024 and endorse the proposed work to develop a long-term strategic approach to preventing and reducing poverty and inequality in Sheffield.

### **8.3 Reasons for Decision**

8.3.1 The recommendations build on the commitments made by the Strategy and Resources Committee to support Sheffielders through the cost-of-living crisis. Working with communities and partners across the city, the recommendations ensure that SCC will continue to play a leading role through the strategic and tactical incident type response

### **8.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

8.4.1 Stop our response. Dismissed as supporting our communities and businesses through the cost-of-living crisis is critical to the wellbeing of our city. We are committed to standing alongside communities in the face of the crisis.

8.4.2 Continue as is. Sustain our response as is the current. Dismissed as while there has been some excellent collaboration to support our communities, we need to continue to review and adapt our approach in response to the changing crisis. Further, we need to focus on the forthcoming challenge of winter 2023/24 and pivoting towards a longer term, sustained approach to tackling poverty in Sheffield.

8.4.3 Move to a wholly preventative approach. Rejected because of continuing acute need to provide support for people facing crisis now and in the immediate future.

## **9. HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND SCHEME**

9.1 The Executive Director Neighbourhood Services submitted a report:

1. To update Strategy and Resources Committee on the “Cost-of-Living Cohort Analysis” including findings on cohorts most affected by the cost-of-living crisis and financial inequalities, as requested by the Committee in April 2023;

2. To seek the Committee’s approval to spend the Household Support Fund from DWP in line with the spending plan detailed in this report and as guided by findings of the Cohort Analysis;

3. To seek this Committee’s approval to make changes to the application scheme as detailed in this report;

4. To inform the committee of future considerations and decisions that would need to be made should the Household Support Fund grant be discontinued in March 2024; and

5. To seek approval for ringfencing £700,000 that the Director of Communities will

be able to use to respond flexibly to the Cost-of-Living issues

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

(a) approves the spending plan for Free School Meal Vouchers for 23/24 as detailed in the report;

(b) approves the targeted award to households who are in receipt of Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Support but not benefits from DWP or HMRC and therefore not receiving Cost of Living payments;

(c) approves the spending plan and changes to the grant application scheme as detailed in the report;

(d) approves ringfencing of £700,000 from the Housing Support Fund that is to be used in the period July 2023 to March 2024 by the Director of Communities to respond flexibly to Cost of Living issues and; to the extent not already covered by existing delegations, delegate authority to the Director of Communities in consultation with the Director of Finance and Commercial Services and the General Counsel, to make decisions on spending this money in order to meet the aims and objections in this report; and

(e) notes the Household Support Fund runs ends in March 2024 with no guarantee that it will be extended beyond that point.

9.3 **Reasons for Decision**

9.3.1 The recommendations presented to the Strategy and Resources Committee will enable Sheffield City Council to provide the funds to support vulnerable households in the city to meet immediate needs and help those who are struggling to afford food, energy and water bills, and other related essentials through the cost-of-living crisis.

9.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

9.4.1 This report provides a detailed proposal and delivery that officers, in consultation with elected members, believe to be the best way of delivering the Household Support Fund.

10. **SHEFFIELD FOOD STRATEGY AND FUTURE COMMISSIONING MODEL FOR IMPROVING DIET/OBESITY PREVENTION 2024-2029**

10.1 The Director of Public Health submitted a report providing an overview of and seek approval for 'Fairer, Healthier, Greener' the proposed new Food Strategy for Sheffield. The report invites member input on areas of the Food Strategy that should be prioritised by Sheffield City Council (the Council) during its implementation in order to maximise its contribution to corporate goals including Net Zero, better health and reducing inequalities.

The report also provides an overview of the proposed new commissioning model

for improving diet and preventing obesity 2024-29 which forms an integral part of the new Food Strategy's implementation.

The report also then outlines and seeks approval for the recommended initiatives that will be supported by the annual investment proposed of £658,000 per year for 5 years (£3.29m in total) from the Public Health grant allocation

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

(a) approves the food strategy 'Fairer, Healthier, Greener: A Food Strategy for Sheffield';

(b) commits to developing policy regarding food served in council owned spaces so that it reflects the aspirations set out in 'Fairer, Healthier, Greener';

(c) acknowledges the Council's commitment to working with local communities and partners to identify spaces where sustainable food production and provision can be accommodated;

(d) approves the 'improving diet, preventing obesity proposed commissioning model 2024-29';

(e) approves the allocation of £658,000 per year, for the next 5 years, (£3.29m in total) as outlined in this report; and

(f) approves the commissioning of the Tier 2 child and adult weight management contract, as outlined in this report.

**10.3 Reasons for Decision**

10.3.1 The proposal set before the Strategy and Resources Committee is the preferred option because:

10.3.2 Poverty, poor diet and the impacts of climate change are some of the most serious public health challenges of the 21st century. Current local trends for dietary indicators and obesity are worsening in many cases and inequalities are widening. Without action, the health of individuals and of our planet will continue to worsen, health inequalities associated with poor diet obesity will persist and the economic and social costs will increase to unsustainable levels.

10.3.3 The proposed improving nutrition and obesity prevention commissioning model 2024-2029 is based on analysis of local need, reviews of existing local initiatives, service user feedback, and draws on good practice and evidence of what works. It builds on learning from the 2019-2024 commissioning strategy and represents a refinement of this approach within the available funding rather than being a radical departure.

**10.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

10.4.1 Renew the 2018 Food Strategy. The 2018 Food Strategy had a primary focus on

nutrition. A motion was passed in 2021 which committed the Council to develop a new Food Strategy which a broader set of outcomes. The new Food Strategy also better reflects the Council's Net Zero aspirations and has been updated to take account of the significant impact of the pandemic and subsequent cost of living crisis on people's ability to access nutritious food.

- 10.4.2 Re-commission or extend current contracts and initiatives at the current level of funding. The broad approach to tackling poor diet and obesity is to remain the same as it continues to reflect an evidence based, whole-systems approach. However, as outlined in this report, service reviews and analysis of Sheffield's programme for improving diet and preventing obesity identified some cost pressures, opportunities for efficiencies and gaps in activity which can be partially addressed through re-profiling of funding across the priorities.
- 10.4.3 Bring weight management services in house. It is recommended that weight management services be put out to open tender as has been the case since these services were first established. Going through an open tender process will enable us to ensure value for money and secure an external provider with specialist expertise and experience delivering this service.

## **11. LOCAL LAND CHARGES - PROPOSED FEE INCREASES**

- 11.1 The Chief Operating Officer submitted a report seeking approval to increase Local Land Charges fees charged in accordance with the relevant legislation. Local Land Charges team provide property information to customers to support the conveyancing process of residential and commercial property.

- 11.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That Strategy and Resources Policy Committee:-

(a) approves the proposed increase to the fees charged by the Local Land Charges Team in accordance with Table, set out in the report, from 1st August 2023; and

(b) delegates to the General Council annual changes to the Local Land Charges fees, on a cost recovery basis in consultation with the Section 151 officer.

### **11.3 Reasons for Decision**

- 11.3.1 Recovering the costs of these services enables the Local Land Charges Team to continue to provide an excellent service to customers, supporting property transactions within Sheffield.

### **11.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

- 11.4.1 If the fees are not increased to continue to recover the costs of providing these services, the service will be subsidised from core funding which is already under significant pressure. Where statute allows for the cost of a service to be recovered from the customer, and council undercovers those costs, this impacts on the council's ability to provide other services to the people of Sheffield.

## **12. EXTENSION OF THE DYNAMIC PURCHASING SCHEME (DPS) FOR TRANSPORT SERVICES**

12.1 The Executive Director, Neighbourhood Services submitted a report seeking approval to commission transport provision for a period of up to 5 years (until July 2028). The report sets out transport services delivered by the Council and those who benefit from such services. The report also sets out the need for transport services and explain why a further 5 years of service provision is required.

12.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That Strategy and Resources Policy Committee approves the commissioning of transport services from private transport contractor providers for the next 5 years, with an estimated value of £45.4m, as set out in the report now submitted.

### **12.3 Reasons for Decision**

12.3.1 The commissioning strategy will ensure continuous delivery of transport services to meet the needs of the young people. The commissioning strategy will ensure the Council can fulfil its statutory SEND home to school transport responsibility and delivery of the Council's objective of "Happy young people who have the start they need for the future they want".

12.3.2 The intention to extend the current DPS (subject to separate Council approval) will continue the control on the cost per seat.

12.3.3 The commissioning strategy will continue to support local transport businesses and local people.

12.3.4 The commissioning strategy will provide the opportunity for the Council to support local transport businesses and help guide them on their carbon reduction journey.

### **12.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

12.4.1 Option 1 – Do nothing. This is not a realistic option as the control that the current arrangements provide would be lost. This would lead to a financially unsustainable and operationally inefficient service. It would also put the council in a position that no longer aligns to our strategic objectives in terms of the environment and lower emissions. The council would also be in breach of its statutory duties if it could not provide a SEND Home to school transport service

12.4.2 Option 2 – Revise the commissioning strategy so only ULEV and EV vehicles can be used for the provision of transport. This is not an option. The in-house fleet is CAZ compliant but the available vehicles on the private contractor fleet that meet this criterion are currently very limited. This would mean that the Council would not be able to fulfil the demand and thus would not be able to meet its statutory obligations in terms of transport.

12.4.3 Option 3 – Provide in-house. This is not a viable option. Due to the increase in demand the current fleet is near its capacity. In order to cover the work that is currently serviced by the DPS contract the council would have to increase its fleet

size considerably and have a number of vehicles that would only have a unique use for this service. In turn this would mean the council would lose the flexibility that the DPS has to offer.

- 12.4.4 It is worth noting that the introduction of the Clean Air Zone (CAZ) will impact positively on current taxi provision by increasing the number of CAZ compliant vehicles used.