

SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

Communities, Parks and Leisure Policy Committee

Meeting held 29 January 2024

PRESENT: Councillors Richard Williams (Chair), Marieanne Elliot (Deputy Chair), Janet Ridler (Group Spokesperson), Tony Downing, Alan Hooper, Bernard Little, Karen McGowan, Robert Reiss and Garry Weatherall

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 No apologies were received.

2. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 There were no formal declarations of interest made at the meeting.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

4.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on **12 December 2023** were approved as a correct record.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

5.1 Ruth Hubbard attended the Committee meeting and asked a range of questions:

Q1. From reading the report it is not at all clear to me why the existing and effective use of current enforcement measures are insufficient to tackle instances of anti-social behaviour in the city centre and why the committee would seek to ramp this up into the more generalised regulation of public spaces and behaviour. We all need to feel safe on our streets but.. Why, for example, is a group of students sitting in a green space having a can of beer at the end of an exam a problem? Or, indeed, a student and their visiting parents on graduation day having a picnic and sharing a bottle of wine. How are buskers and street entertainers affected by these proposals? And where is the evidence that passive begging affects quality of life of the more fortunate majority? Do we want to stop a child who has lost their bus fare from asking passers by if they can help? Are we really suggesting members of the public should become less tolerant, and begin to refuse to accept these kinds of behaviours, lowering the thresholds for intervention? And to want to cleanse or airbrush our streets and public spaces of people who struggle to or won't conform - in a cost of living, mental health, housing and inequality crisis and so on?

Q2. Do we also want to make unelected council officers local lawmakers and

enforcers whilst restricting civil liberties, having few checks and balances, and with much lower burdens of proof than is normally required? Is there not a much more positive vision and strategy that could be developed, or at least included, for what our city centre public streets and spaces mean, than extra regulation and criminalisation? Is all that's being proposed really worth it, and a proportionate response?

Q3. A narrative of 'public order' and of 'undesirables' has been pretty prevalent in the U.K, not least as we have seen applied by the current government. But I see early consultation or scoping work has already also been carried out and this seems to have prioritised business and corporate interests in determining how things should be, and we see councils increasingly aligning with these interests everywhere.. But what equivalent early consultation and scoping work has been carried out with those most likely to be disproportionately impacted by a PSPO or with those working with them, such as VCS, faith and other outreach groups, hostel and supported accommodation providers, homelessness, asylum seeker, migrant and youth organisations and so on. Or indeed with city centre residents/residents' groups? Or is it as it appears in this report, that it's what local business interests state that really matters, and that will continue to be prioritised?

Q4. Presumably when it comes to enforcement there is a potential council resource likely to be involved if council officers are going to have enforcement powers. Might the council employ a private security firm to enforce a PSPO, as some councils have and which offers financial incentives for issuing FPNs? Will likely costs be consulted on and in relation to views about whether extremely constrained council budgets should be prioritised for enforcement activity and other costs? Do we know at this stage what financial implications there might be here for council budgets, or have these been anticipated?

Q5. I note the local data provided. Why is there nothing, however, by way of evidence provided in the report, of the fairly extensive criticisms of, and problems with, PSPOs. Nor reporting of the extremely thin to negligible evidence base for any success that can be attributed to them?

Q6. The proposed area for the PSPO appears to be widely drawn. It includes perhaps up to 25% of its area where there is the lowest level (nearly nothing) in terms of ASB reported. And fairly large local areas where there is barely much more. Is the proposed wide area necessary and proportionate as is required? (It doesn't really appear so?)

Q7. The serious studies that exist all draw the same conclusions including, of course, that they disproportionately target, impact and criminalise the most vulnerable, the poorest, young people, migrant groups, homeless people and so on. I note the talk of signposting to support services and an emphasis on harm reduction. But are poverty levels, inequalities, mental health etc so improved - and benefit levels, youth services, the housing situation and statutory and vcs sector funding also so improved that we expect to see a different picture and pattern emerging in Sheffield? How will monitoring be undertaken and responded to?

Q8. If the report is agreed, will the council anonymise and make all consultation responses public?

The Chair promised a written response.

6. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

6.1	No Members questions were received.
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7. WORK PROGRAMME

7.1 The Principal Democratic Services Officer introduced the report which contained the Committee's work programme for consideration and discussion. The aim of the work programme was to show all known, substantive agenda items for forthcoming meetings of the Committee, to enable this committee, other committees, officers, partners, and the public to plan their work with and for the committee.

7.2 It was agreed to add the Task and Finish Group item to the March meeting.

7.3 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That:-

1. The Committee's work programme, as set out in Appendix 1 be agreed, including any additions and amendments identified in Part 1;
2. Consideration be given to the further additions or adjustments to the work programme presented at Part 2 of Appendix 1; and
3. Members give consideration to any further issues to be explored by officers for inclusion in Part 2 of Appendix 1 of the next work programme report, for potential addition to the work programme.

8. CITY CENTRE PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER (PSPO)

8.1 The Head of Communities accompanied by South Yorkshire Police and other Officers, introduced this item which set out the current position regarding anti-social behaviour (ASB) in the city centre and sought approval of a draft Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) and approval to consult the public and other stakeholders on the introduction of the PSPO.

The Committees attention was drawn to a change in the wording of the recommendations, and these were displayed on the Webcast for the public to see.

8.2 Some discussion took place and Members gave comments and asked questions. Officer and South Yorkshire Police responses were provided surrounding consultation process, definitions, impact factors and funding.

8.3 **RESOLVED:** That the **Communities, Parks and Leisure Policy Committee:-**

1. Approves the proposed draft Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) for the purposes of carrying out public and stakeholder consultation on the introduction of a PSPO in Sheffield City Centre.
2. Approves carrying out public and stakeholder consultation on the introduction of a PSPO in Sheffield City Centre.

(NOTE: The result of the vote on the resolution was FOR – 6 Members; AGAINST – 2 Members; ABSTENTIONS – 1 Member).

8.4 **Reasons for Decision**

8.4.1 The evidence demonstrates a need to change the existing approach to controlling anti-social behaviour in the City Centre. The introduction of a PSPO would give the Council and SYP Officers additional powers to adopt a new approach. The introduction of a PSPO alongside an enforcement framework that focuses on harm reduction could have positive outcomes for some of the City's most vulnerable residents. The Government's Statutory Guidance recommends that councils engage in an open and public consultation to give the users of the public space the opportunity to comment on whether the proposed restriction or restrictions of a PSPO are appropriate, proportionate or needed at all. The Council should also ensure that specific groups likely to have a particular interest are consulted. A further report will be produced in due course with recommendations about whether or not to make a PSPO based on the outcomes of the consultation.

8.5 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

8.5.1 **Not to consider a PSPO and continue with the current response to ASB in the city centre** - This is the 'do nothing' option.

The current approach is to target the most entrenched individuals, initially to engage and support and if unsuccessful to seek legal orders. This approach is limited to those identified and recognised as complex or entrenched and does not allow for immediate intervention or enforcement action on unknown persons. The current approach does not allow for wider prevention work.

A PSPO would support the identification of individuals requiring essential support or safeguarding. Additionally for those individuals against whom legal action is being sought, for example, a CBO or injunctions, the mapped PSPO zone could form part of the exclusions or restrictions of those orders.

The evidence provided in section 1.3 demonstrates that the ASB issues identified are persistent and have a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the locality. An alternative approach is needed to affect a reduction in the level of ASB and therefore the do nothing option has been discounted.

9. **CLIMATE STATEMENTS**

9.1 The Head of Parks and Countryside introduced the report which aimed to present the Communities, Parks, and Leisure Policy Committee Climate Statement for consideration by the Housing Policy to ensure that the proposed actions are reflected in the work programme of the committee.

The Communities, Parks, and Leisure Policy Committee climate statement seeks to:

1. Respond to the Annual Climate Progress Report 2022/23 in a timely manner.
2. Restate the cross-party council commitment to taking what action we can to address the climate emergency, adapt our city and council for a changing climate and reduce emissions to achieve our ambition to be a net zero city and council by 2030.
3. Increase understanding of the impact climate change will have on committees, the opportunities that tackling climate change offers, and the contribution to climate and net zero action each committee is currently making and needs to make moving forward.

9.2 RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Communities, Parks and Leisure Policy Committee:-

1. Consider the Statement of Climate Commitments relevant to the Communities, Parks, and Leisure Policy Committee;
2. Resolve that it is satisfied that the actions contained within the Statement of Climate Commitments are reflected in the Work Programme of the Communities, Parks, and Leisure Policy Committee;
3. Consider whether any amendments to the Work Programme of the Communities, Parks, and Leisure Policy Committee are required in order to best meet the actions contained within the Statement of Climate Commitments.

9.3 Reasons for Decision

9.3.1 It is important that the response to the Annual Climate Progress Report is open and transparent in setting out the challenges which the local authority faces in making progress and clarifies future expectations on the part we all have to play in addressing climate change.

9.3.2 Committee do not currently have specific strategic goals for climate. The process required to develop these, and have the statements approved to be read at each committee meeting meant that option 5.2 was not feasible with the available resource and timeframe.

9.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected

9.4.1 Not providing committee climate statements considered due to the resource required to collate.

9.4.2 Providing more detailed Committee Climate Statements that provided an overview of strategic climate goals, with each Chair then reading the committees statement publicly at their respective committee meeting following release of the report.

10. GRANT ARRANGEMENTS FOR VOLUNTEER RUN LIBRARIES

- 10.1 The Head of Libraries, Archives and Information Services introduced the report which sought the Committee's approval for proposals to support libraries in the city for the period 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2026.

The report sought approval to:

- Establish a fund of £135,700 in 2024/2025, from which grant awards will be distributed to Associate Libraries and do the same again in 2025/2026; and
- Provide a package of support for both Associate and Co-delivered libraries as set out in this report on the basis that Together, the grant and support package will be £209,000 for each of the two years

- 10.2 RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Communities, Parks and Leisure Policy Committee:-

1. Approves the council distributing a grant fund of £135,700 per year to Associate Libraries to assist with their continued sustainability for the period 1st April 2024 until 31st March 2026, subject to relevant agreements and criteria being satisfied.
2. Approves support for Associate and Co-delivered libraries from the Libraries, Archives and Information Service and other Council services continuing until 31 March 2026, as set out in this report.

- 10.3 Reasons for Decision

10.3.1

- The current arrangements for Associate and Co-delivered libraries expires on 31st March 2024.
- Continued support will increase the likelihood of all volunteer run libraries remaining open and vibrant for the period 01 April 2024 to 31 March 2026.
- Continued support for Associate libraries will give added confidence to trustees and volunteers, at a point they are taking on longer-term and new lease responsibilities.
- Supporting the volunteer run libraries to remain on the Library Management System means that all Sheffield library members can access any library in Sheffield using a single, city-wide library card.
- Continued support will provide a period of financial stability and growth that will attract more volunteers and trustees and give them additional time to build capacity and develop external funding opportunities.
- The proposal will ensure the standards and controls relating to the operation of the Council's Library Management System by volunteer libraries are maintained.

- 10.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected

10.4.1

Option 2 – Removal of all grant and funded support This option provides no

funding for the Associate libraries and removes all support packages beyond which can be provided at no cost to the Council. Strength of this option.

10.4.2 Strength of this option:

- This option would save £209k per year.

10.4.3 Weaknesses of this options:

- Consultation with the volunteer run libraries shows a slip in their financial sustainability due to the Pandemic, and therefore sole reliance on fundraising and reserves is unlikely to be a sustainable option.
- A high probability that a number of libraries would close.
- Volunteer-run libraries may lose volunteers and struggle to recruit more due to a loss of stability and confidence of Council support.
- Any library closures would have a negative impact on the health, wellbeing, and prosperity of the communities where libraries closed

10.4.4 Option 3 – Maintenance of grant, but removal of other funded support In this option the Associate libraries would still receive a grant, but the support package would be reduced or cut altogether. This means they would not have access to any Council library book stock and resources, the Library Management System/I.T, and the Peoples' Network (computer access) or any Council staff support.

10.4.5 Strengths of this options:

- This option would save the Council £62k per year.
- The financial sustainability of the volunteer libraries would be maintained

10.4.6 Weaknesses of this option:

- The quality of the service would significantly reduce as they would not have access to the city-wide book stock and resources and would need to buy significant amounts of new books to retain a viable library service.
- This option would impact on all communities in Sheffield as currently books can be collected and returned to any of the 28 libraries in Sheffield which would no longer be possible as Associate Libraries would no longer have access to the city-wide catalogue.
- Without guidance and support from Council staff, the quality of the library offer is likely to reduce – i.e. reduced access to training, governance support, ensuring compliance with data protection, equalities.

10.4.7 Option 4 – 10% reduction in grant and support This option would be to continue with the grant and the support package, but with a ten percent reduction on the grant.

10.4.8 Strengths of this option:

- This option would save the Council £13,570 per year

10.4.9 Weaknesses of this option:

- A ten percent reduction in grant, plus the weak financial position of the libraries due to the Pandemic, plus rising energy costs, could mean some libraries can no longer cover their basic running costs.

11. VERBAL UPDATE ON TRAMLINES

11.1 This item was deferred to a future meeting.

12. VERBAL UPDATE FOR ROSE GARDEN CAFÉ

12.1 The Head of Parks and Countryside provided a verbal update on the Rose Garden café which included information on partnership work and meetings that have been held regarding work being carried out and what has been agreed. The Chair post was also mentioned. The update was noted by the committee.

13. VERBAL UPDATE LAUNCH OF SPORT & LEISURE STRATEG

13.1 The Physical Activity, Sport and Health Officer gave a brief update on this item. An informative video was shown to the committee. Members gave comments and asked questions. Officer responses were provided surrounding healthy food and drink, ongoing work and collaboration with the Peak District.