

# Agenda Item 3

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council of the City of Sheffield held in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Pinstone Street, Sheffield, S1 2HH, on Wednesday 8 January 2014, at 2.00 pm, pursuant to notice duly given and Summonses duly served.

## PRESENT

THE LORD MAYOR (Councillor Vickie Priestley)  
THE DEPUTY LORD MAYOR (Councillor Peter Rippon)

1	<i>Arbourthorne Ward</i> Jack Scott	10	<i>Dore &amp; Totley Ward</i> Joe Otten Colin Ross	19	<i>Mosborough Ward</i> David Barker Isobel Bowler Tony Downing
2	<i>Beauchief &amp; Greenhill Ward</i> Simon Clement-Jones Roy Munn Clive Skelton	11	<i>East Ecclesfield Ward</i> Garry Weatherall Steve Wilson Joyce Wright	20	<i>Nether Edge Ward</i> Nikki Bond Anders Hanson Qurban Hussain
3	<i>Beighton Ward</i> Helen Mirfin-Boukouris Chris Rosling-Josephs Ian Saunders	12	<i>Ecclesall Ward</i> Penny Baker Roger Davison Diana Stimely	21	<i>Richmond Ward</i> John Campbell Martin Lawton Lynn Rooney
4	<i>Birley Ward</i> Denise Fox Bryan Lodge Karen McGowan	13	<i>Firth Park Ward</i> Sheila Constance Alan Law Chris Weldon	22	<i>Shiregreen &amp; Brightside Ward</i> Peter Price Sioned-Mair Richards Peter Rippon
5	<i>Broomhill Ward</i> Jayne Dunn Shaffaq Mohammed Stuart Wattam	14	<i>Fulwood Ward</i> Sue Alston Andrew Sangar Cliff Woodcraft	23	<i>Southey Ward</i> Leigh Bramall Tony Damms Gill Furniss
6	<i>Burngreave Ward</i> Jackie Drayton Ibrar Hussain Talib Hussain	15	<i>Gleadless Valley Ward</i> Steve Jones Cate McDonald Tim Rippon	24	<i>Stannington Ward</i> David Baker Katie Condliffe Vickie Priestley
7	<i>Central Ward</i> Jillian Creasy Mohammad Maroof Robert Murphy	16	<i>Graves Park Ward</i> Ian Auckland Denise Reaney	25	<i>Stockbridge &amp; Upper Don Ward</i> Alison Brelford Richard Crowther Philip Wood
8	<i>Crookes Ward</i> Sylvia Anginotti Rob Frost	17	<i>Hillsborough Ward</i> Janet Bragg Bob Johnson George Lindars-Hammond	26	<i>Walkey Ward</i> Ben Curran Neale Gibson
9	<i>Darnall Ward</i> Harry Harpham Mazher Iqbal Mary Lea	18	<i>Manor Castle Ward</i> Jenny Armstrong Terry Fox Pat Midgley	27	<i>West Ecclesfield Ward</i> Adam Hurst Alf Meade
				28	<i>Woodhouse Ward</i> Mick Rooney Jackie Satur Ray Satur



**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Trevor Bagshaw, Julie Dore, Keith Hill, Bob McCann, Nikki Sharpe and Geoff Smith.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest from Members of the City Council.

**3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS COUNCIL MEETING**

RESOLVED: On the Motion of Councillor Pat Midgley, seconded by Councillor Gill Furniss, that the minutes of the meeting of the City Council held on 4 December 2013 be approved as a correct record.

**4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS**

**4.1 Public Questions**

(a) Public Question concerning Footpaths, Waterthorpe

Gail Smith stated, in relation to footpaths in Waterthorpe, that she had been informed by a local councillor that Amey would be instructed to re-do work to footpaths, which were not of an acceptable standard and were, in places, dangerous. She stated that tenants and residents had been informed that a request had been made to Councillor Scott as the appropriate Cabinet Member, to visit the area. She asked what was being done.

Councillor Jack Scott, the Cabinet Member for Environment, Recycling and Streetscene responded by stating that the repairs which had been carried out in Waterthorpe were not part of the key programme of improvement work. He stated that he had not been contacted in relation to Waterthorpe. However, if work was not up to standard then he would examine the issue further. Councillor Scott stated that he would be willing to visit Waterthorpe with the relevant local Councillors for the Mosborough Ward.

(b) Public Question Concerning Safeguarding for People with Learning Disabilities

Adam Butcher referred to a recent case of a man with learning disabilities who was locked away and starved of food and deprived of basic human rights. He asked what the Council was going to do in light of what had happened and whether protection of the most vulnerable people was a priority. He requested a written response.

Councillor Mary Lea, the Cabinet Member for Health, Care and Independent

Living responded that this was a most shocking case and it concerned a very vulnerable person. She stated that the person concerned had been taken into hospital and a safeguarding referral was made, with the man being offered supportive living and temporary housing. He would continue to be offered on-going support. He had been brought to the attention of the City Council by the South Yorkshire Police. Councillor Lea confirmed that she would provide a written response to Mr Butcher.

(c) Public Question Concerning Streets Ahead Contract Variation

Nigel Slack referred to a decision, which was made by the Leader of the Council on 20 December 2013 concerning a variation to the Streets Ahead contract. He stated that the decision was reported on the Council's website, but this reveals nothing about what was actually decided about the contract. He stated that what was known is that it was a key decision and was urgent and was made on the basis of a 'secret report' and was approved. It was not known what the decision was, the reasons for the decision, other options considered and the reasons for secrecy (except that Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 applied) and there was little information as to why it was urgent.

He stated that the decision was not subject to call in and so could not be scrutinised. He asked will the Council, considering that this is a 25 year contract and that the Paragraph 3 can be overcome by declaring the public interest in disclosing the information outweighs the public interest in maintaining the exemption, give more information about the decision.

Councillor Jack Scott, the Cabinet Member for Environment, Recycling and Streetscene, responded that the decision related to financing by banks and the special purpose vehicle that delivers the Streets Ahead contract. The advice which was given is that it was not in the public interest or that of the Council or Amey to publish the information. The decision would not have an impact on the quality of the Streets Ahead programme, the jobs which were part of the programme or 5 year timeline to complete the core investment works or the benefits which the scheme delivered for Sheffield. The decision was to ensure that bank financing could continue. The decision was made with the support of the Director of Legal Services and the Chair of the relevant Scrutiny Committee.

(d) Public Question Concerning Freedom of Information Requests

Martin Brighton asked does this Council ever consider issues such as reputation management and damage limitation to be factors when deciding how to process Freedom of Information (Fol) requests?

Councillor Harry Harpham, the Cabinet Member for Homes and Neighbourhoods and Deputy Leader, responded that, yes, Sheffield City Council has a good track record of managing complex Freedom of Information requests.

(e) Public Questions Concerning a Tenants and Residents Association

Martin Brighton asked why has the Council refused to:

1. provide evidence of what BNTARA is accused of;
2. allow an independent auditor to inspect the books; and
3. comply with the Fol Act with these refusals

He asked, why has the Council:

1. Not restored the Levy money that he stated is being illegally withheld; and
2. Supported personnel who have admitted breaching their own procedures

Mr Brighton asked does the Council consider that all due process with BNTARA is concluded.

Mr Brighton stated that with respect to the above, the Council has now conceded that it attempted to both deceive and unlawfully withhold information with respect to proven false Council claims of prior community consultation and consent required for local expenditure, followed by fabricated documents that appeared to elicit endorsement by the local area housing forum and the then area board. He asked why has the Council continued to support the offending personnel, both for what they have done and continue to do, and also for their unlawful breach of the Fol Act.

Councillor Harry Harpham, the Cabinet Member for Homes and Neighbourhoods and Deputy Leader of the Council, stated that the Council Housing Service provided a detailed report to the Area Board on the findings of ongoing dialogue with the New Batemoor Tenants and Residents Association (TARA) prior to a decision taken to de-recognise this TARA. The TARA has a copy of this report. Since this time, the Council have responded to all questions raised. He stated that the Council believes it has fully complied with all Fol requests and there is a process in place if people are not satisfied through the Information Commissioner's Office.

A decision was taken to de-recognise based on the inclusiveness of this TARA and also some discrepancy in their accounts in relation to which the Council have consistently asked for their appointed accountant/audit to confirm details. In the end, it was felt that de-recognising the TARA was appropriate and the Interim Director of Housing, following agreement with the South West Area Board, took this action. This was supported by Cabinet Advisor who attended the Area Board meeting and Cabinet Member.

The interim Director has confirmed that the decision stands but for the Council's own purposes would like to carry out its own audit which is being planned.

Councillor Harpham stated that the Levy money should be used to ensure that TARAs work across the local community/ area. Given the issues with how this TARA operates and the questions around the audited accounts, suspending the levy money is appropriate and this has been confirmed in writing to New Batemoor TARA.

The Interim Director of Housing carried out an investigation following allegations made against the conduct of the Area Manager and she found that, although some lessons could be learnt in terms of recording/ following procedures, the Area Team had tried to work closely with the TARA over a considerable period to resolve issues in very difficult circumstances and she found no evidence to contradict this or any inappropriate behaviour or conduct. The outcome of this investigation was communicated to Mr Brighton and the matter has been closed. The Interim Director of Housing had also said that, if any further evidence was provided, she would investigate this as a new complaint.

Councillor Harpham confirmed that he considered that all due process with the TARA is concluded. He stated that no evidence had been received that the Council have not appropriately consulted with tenants, the Local Housing Forum and Area Board and arrived at sensible decisions regarding agreeing priorities for the area and are now fully compliant in terms of procuring works that represent value for money. He added that the Council had responded to all requests.

(f) Public Question Concerning Information About Complaints

Martin Brighton stated that the Chief Executive has twice written that he would provide information about the alleged complaints made by a claimed eight elected members against him, upon which basis email communications were sanctioned last year. Now he refuses. He asked can the Chief Executive be trusted?

Councillor Harry Harpham, the Cabinet Member for Homes and Neighbourhoods and Deputy Leader of the Council responded that, it was his opinion that the Chief Executive of the Council can be implicitly trusted.

(g) Public Questions Concerning Libraries

- (i) Marcus O'Hagan stated that the Council alleges it has calculated the savings that it wishes to make by reducing the number of libraries in the City. He asked has the Council calculated the cost to the City of those closures, when was this cost calculated, by what method and by whom and where are the results publicly available?

He made reference to a recent study of a city in Canada which had shown that for every \$1 spent on libraries there is a return to the city of \$5.60. Mr O'Hagan stated that it is reasonable to conclude that the consequence of the proposed saving of £1.6M as given by Councillor Iqbal at a public meeting in Upperthorpe is that there is a concealed cost to the people of Sheffield of £8.96M. He asked how does the Council justify this.

Secondly, Mr O'Hagan asked where, when and by who was the decision to consult on the closure of libraries made? Where are the minutes of those meetings published and where can the consideration of feedback from earlier consultations be found and can it be demonstrated that the

Council has been materially influenced by any consultation process?

Thirdly, Mr O'Hagan asked would the Council be happy with a judicial review of the process surrounding the library 'consultation' and decision-making process.

- (ii) Pauline Rosser asked what consideration has been given to the impact of the loss of library services to the users who will be affected. She stated that the people who are likely to be most affected are children, the elderly and households without access to computers and the internet. Children would be disproportionately affected by library closures. It was difficult for people to travel to alternative libraries. She referred to the comparatively low number of children in the City who achieved grades A-C at GCSE and asked how restricting young people's access to reading material would help this situation.

Some older people would not be able to travel to an alternative library and she asked whether the home library service might be extended to all those older people who were affected by the closure of their nearest library. She stated that the Peoples' Network internet access was especially important for people who were unemployed and seeking work. She asked what consideration had been given to the impact of the closures.

- (iii) Patricia White asked how the Council could justify library closures when it was spending excessive amounts of money on consultancy fees; there was a substantial amount of uncollected Council Tax; £420K on the refurbishment of Sorby House; the refurbishment of Council offices; and the redevelopment of Park Hill flats.
- (iv) Mel Smart stated that the report concerning the Library Review states that the sparsely populated rural areas should be ignored. She said that no area of Sheffield should be ignored and this statement could be considered a form of discrimination and exclusion. She asked how does the City Council propose to fulfil its statutory obligations by providing a library service to this group.
- (v) Emily Wheeler stated that young people and students have been particularly affected by the recent economic downturn and people in deprived areas seem to be bearing the brunt of cuts to public services. People who cannot afford to work for free are less likely to volunteer to run libraries and have a greater need for the services offered. She stated that closing libraries in deprived areas of Sheffield will deepen the socio-economic and digital divides in Sheffield communities. She asked is this something the Council is willing to let happen.
- (vi) Ruth Woodhouse asked what would be done to replace school visits to local libraries and she expressed concern as to the likely effect on literacy levels.

- (vii) David O'Hagan stated that he did not believe that anybody in the Chamber wished to see local libraries closed. He asked when would the 'them and us' mentality be left behind and we do what we believe in our hearts.
- (viii) Aileen Wade asked whether there were any Councillors who had not used libraries.
- (ix) Dermot Gleeson asked whether Councillors would accept cuts to libraries that would limit access of ordinary people to books and materials and will they deprive people of access to intellectual material.
- (x) Gillian Stern stated that people had been told that no decisions had yet been taken as regards libraries. She made reference to a photograph which indicated that Darnall Library was to stay open and asked how this should be perceived by the public.
- (xi) Michael Davis spoke on behalf of the Friends of Greenhill Library. He made reference to an appearance by Councillor Iqbal on Radio Sheffield in which he had said that the situation regarding the City's libraries was the direct responsibility of the Government. He asked whether Councillor Iqbal agreed that, if Councillors were so powerless, should the money available be better spent on services in the community, such as libraries and perhaps the Council replaced by volunteers.
- (xii) Margaret Davis stated that the Council's website recently reported about library groups visiting independent libraries in Wakefield. She said that the group from Greenhill was struck by the amount of funding available to the libraries, which included funding from Wakefield Council and buildings and wages were covered by other means. She asked how it was proposed that libraries in Sheffield could remain open without comparable funding.
- (xiii) Julia Shergold asked if Councillors were aware that the library service works only as a whole service and could not be divided or run by different providers. There were issues relating to data protection and stock-sharing which meant that it was not possible to split the service and the proposals will not work. She stated that the Council should stop doing the Government's 'dirty work' and stand for the people who depend on local services.
- (xiiii) Katy Cossham stated that the Council's Equality Impact Assessment concludes that the impact of library closures on users of libraries will be significant and that various groups will be affected. She asked is the Council confident that they will not be flouting the Equality Act 2010 through closing half of the City's libraries.

Councillor Mazher Iqbal, the Cabinet Member for Communities and Inclusion, responded to the questions. He stated that the consultation period was still ongoing and no decisions had been made to close any library. The Council would provide a comprehensive and efficient library service, as it was legally

required to do.

Over the past 3 years, the Council had faced unprecedented cuts of £182 million, which had been imposed on it and was not a choice. The decision to consult on libraries was made by the Executive Director of Communities on 25 September 2013 and the consultation was from 11 October 2013 until 10 January 2014. Information concerning the previous consultation and other information was available on the Council's website. He stated that he believed that the Council had been fair, open and transparent. Since October, he personally had visited groups to which he had been invited to hear their views.

With regard to the Equalities Impact Assessment, he stated that, although the Government was seeking to water-down the Equalities Act, the City Council had said that it would not do the same with its own equalities policies.

Councillor Iqbal stated that the Home Library Service was in place for people who are housebound and unable to visit a library and there were eligibility criteria. In respect of the provision of computers (the People's Network), it was important that the Council provided a comprehensive and efficient service, which he believed the proposals demonstrated.

In relation to the assertion concerning money being spent on Council offices, a letter had been sent to the Deputy Prime Minister to confirm the actual position and correct the statement which had been made concerning "Town Hall make-overs". He could invite the Deputy Prime Minister to view the condition of the Town Hall.

The Council will have had a 50 percent reduction in the funding that it received from the Government by 2015/16. Northern cities had been affected by the Government cuts more than places in the south of the country. He expressed concern that there had been scaremongering in relation to libraries. The report concerning the Library review was clear that the Council was required to provide a comprehensive and efficient Library Service.

The Fairness Commission was established to address the inequalities in the City and the Council had signed up to its principles. It was important that the most vulnerable people were protected. The proposals for the City's libraries adhered to the Fairness Commission principles.

The Schools' Library Service would continue. However, some services would need to change and to do nothing was not an option. Councillor Iqbal stated that he used his local library and the Central Library and he also had a 3 year old child, so he fully understood the potential impact of the proposals. It was important he said that the Council was able to hear as many people's views as possible. He confirmed that there were groups that wished to work with the Council to keep libraries open.

Councillor Iqbal stated in the relation to the view that Councillors be replaced by volunteers, that Councillors did not receive a wage.

In relation to the visit which had been made to Wakefield, the Council did want to learn from other places as to what they were doing and visits had also been made to Doncaster. The consultation and period of discussion with local people demonstrated that there were local groups that wanted to help to keep libraries open. Workshops had been arranged and a number of organisations had come forward to put together business plans for library services.

The Council could not set an illegal budget because in such circumstances, the Government could impose a budget on the Council's behalf. He referred to funding cuts that were also being made to other public services.

Councillor Ben Curran, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources, stated that with regard to the assertion that millions was being spent on Town Hall refurbishment, the Council's Chief Executive had written to the Leader of the Main Opposition Group on the Council and to the Deputy Prime Minister, to explain the situation and that some of the assertions which had been made were not true. As regards the investment in Sorby House, this investment was being made to save expenditure in the future.

Sheffield City Council's performance on uncollected Council Tax was approximately in the middle of all the Core Cities. Sheffield also had a less liberal write off policy in relation to Council Tax arrears than other cities. The Council distinguished between those who would not pay and people who could not pay. Some people had to make a choice between eating, heating their home and paying other bills, such as Council Tax. Under new rules, people on lower incomes now had to pay Council Tax.

#### 4.2 Petitions

##### (a) Petition Objecting to the Possible Closure of Park Library

The Council received a joint paper and electronic petition containing 242 signatures, objecting to the possible closure of Park Library.

Representations on behalf of the petitioners were made by Will Hiorns. He stated that Park Library provided a secure and a welcoming environment, including for people with mental health problems, support for people learning a language and people with particular conditions such as dyslexia. The nearest alternative libraries were Manor Library and the Central Library and both were operating on reduced hours. Many older people and disabled people would not be able to access libraries at all. Five schools and 2 nurseries regularly made visits to the Park Library.

The Library was a neutral resource, and it was safe. It helped to support childrens' reading and it was the centre of the community, maintaining a connection with others in the community. There were 2000 users of Park Library under the age of 18 and many were too young to travel to another library. In addition, many people were registered at their community library, rather than the Central Library. Other groups which used the library, including literacy groups, were likely to cease. The petitioners wished to see a long term commitment to

keep the Library open and use fully trained staff. They asked the Council to listen and to reconsider the options.

The Council referred the petition to Councillor Mazher Iqbal, Cabinet Member for Communities and Inclusion.

(b) Petition Objecting to the Possible Closure of Upperthorpe Library

The Council received a joint paper and electronic petition containing 1254 signatures, objecting to the possible closure of Upperthorpe Library.

Representations on behalf of the petitioners were made by Dave Jeffries. He stated that the petitioners' preferred option was to keep all libraries open and professionally staffed. It was proposed to close Upperthorpe Library. However, the library, situated in the Zest Centre, was unique because the Centre also incorporated a gym, swimming pool, a café and meeting rooms, which was a model through which services could be delivered at a lower cost. A range of people of different ages and with different circumstances used the facilities at the Centre, which served people living in Upperthorpe and Langsett and others from outside of the immediate area. At the Zest Centre, family members were able to take swimming lessons while others used the library. There was a high level of use of the Centre's IT facilities, which reflected the needs of the surrounding population and there were specific resources for children and for people seeking employment.

The library was integral to the Netherthorpe School curriculum and the facilities for disabled people were some of the best in the City. The running costs of the Library were also comparatively low as Library hours of opening could be covered by other Zest staff. The proposal to close this library and other libraries in the City would not actually save the Council much money and the prospect of running the Library using volunteers was not necessarily viable. The Council was asked to keep the Upperthorpe Library open and supported by the Council.

The Council referred the petition to Councillor Mazher Iqbal, the Cabinet Member for Communities and Inclusion.

(c) Petition Objecting to the Possible Closure of Broomhill Library

The Council received a joint paper and electronic petition containing 1942 signatures objecting to the possible closure of Broomhill Library.

Representations on behalf of the petitioners were made by Edward Snelson and Anna Mayer.

Anna Mayer said that she had led 120 young people on a march to show support for libraries and an online petition had received approximately 1500 signatures, which also showed strong support for libraries. She stated that she could not imagine life without her local library, which represented a valuable part of peoples' education.

Edward Snelson stated that Broomhill Library was the second busiest library in Sheffield and people believed it should be by run by the Council and its services professionally delivered. He believed that the plan in the short term for the funding and running of libraries was a smokescreen and was likely to result in the loss of the library in the future, which had costs and implications in the longer term. He asked the Council to prove that this was not a done deal and to change the proposals so that libraries could remain open.

The Council referred the petition to Councillor Mazher Iqbal, the Cabinet Member for Communities and Inclusion.

(d) Petition Objecting to the Possible Closure of Frechville Library

The Council received a petition containing 155 signatures objecting to the possible closure of Frechville Library.

Representations on behalf of the petitioners were made by Vernon Wallis who also spoke on behalf of the Frechville Library Action Group. He stated that the petitioners were opposed to any library being closed. He stated that the Action Group was also submitting a business plan in time for the 10 January deadline. The Library provided a loans service, school visits and the introduction of older people to reading and other activities. He referred to his wife, who had worked in the Library service and would be prepared to assist in the organisation of activity groups which might otherwise be lost. The proposal for volunteers to run library services should include a contribution from the City Council.

The Council referred the petition to Councillor Mazher Iqbal, Cabinet Member for Communities and Inclusion.

(e) Petition Objecting to the Possible Closure of Ecclesfield Library

The Council received a petition containing 1211 signatures objecting to the possible closure of Ecclesfield Library.

Representations on behalf of the petitioners were made by Colin Taylor. He stated that the Library, which opened in 1984 was in good condition and represented good value for money and was used by a lot of people. The Library was at the heart of the local community and people used it to borrow materials, for reference, use IT and as a place to meet other people. Schools also benefitted and the Library helped to promote the love of reading in all generations.

Mr Taylor stated that the area had already lost libraries in High Green and Greonside and, if Ecclesfield Library was also closed, only Chapeltown Library would remain. Travel to libraries which were a further distance would not be easy for some people. The closure of libraries should be avoided and instead, there should be investment in them so more people were attracted to use libraries.

The Council referred the petition to Councillor Mazher Iqbal, Cabinet Member for Communities and Inclusion.

(f) Petition Objecting to the Possible Closure of Burngreave Library

The Council received a petition containing 1239 signatures objecting to the possible closure of Burngreave Library.

Representations on behalf of the petitioners were made by Sharlene Clarke and Lisa Swift.

It was stated that the Library was a vital resource for children who were studying and it was also a resource for younger children and older people, who may not be able to easily travel. People were able to meet others from different backgrounds. The library needed professional staff and the use of volunteers was not thought to be a sustainable solution.

Lisa Swift read some messages from school children. These referred to the role of the Library in giving access to information about jobs, books, the internet, education and learning. The cost of buying books was expensive. She referred to the Council's statutory responsibility to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service and asked the Council to reconsider the proposals.

The Council referred the petition to Councillor Mazher Iqbal, Cabinet Member for Communities and Inclusion.

(g) Petition Objecting to the Possible Closure of Stannington Library

The Council received an electronic petition containing 1535 signatures objecting to the possible closure of Stannington Library.

Representations on behalf of the petitioners were made by Peter Butler. He stated that Stannington Library covered a unique area, which included Bradfield, Dungworth and Storrs. Disabled people from outside of the immediate area used Stannington Library because of its level access and car parking which had suitable spaces for disabled parking. Schools, including Stannington Infants and Nook Lane Junior School also used the Library, which was also well-used by adults and groups. The nearest other library was at Hillsborough and the cost of the journey and comparative lack of facilities for disabled people were prohibitive. The Council was asked to give all libraries some funding and let them do what they could with that resource.

The Council referred the petition to Councillor Mazher Iqbal, Cabinet Member for Communities and Inclusion.

(h) Petition Objecting to the Possible Closure of Walkley Library

The Council received a petition containing 2056 signatures objecting to the possible closure of Walkley Library

Representations on behalf of the petitioners were made by Annette Hobson. She stated that Walkley Library was the only Carnegie Library in Sheffield. It was a

resource that was too precious to be put into the hands of amateurs and there would be a cost and consequences for generations if this was to occur. She appealed to the Council to fight for the people of Sheffield by standing up to the Government as it had before and expressed the wish for the Council to hold a meaningful debate on the issue of libraries.

The Council referred the petition to Councillor Mazher Iqbal, Cabinet Member for Communities and Inclusion.

(i) Petition Objecting to the Possible Closure of Community Libraries

The Council received a joint paper and electronic petition containing 1153 signatures objecting to the possible closure of community libraries.

Representations on behalf of the petitioners were made by Andy Shallice who stated that the petition requested that all libraries should be kept open and that it was not in any political party manifesto to close libraries. Libraries should be run by professionally trained staff, not volunteers and all libraries should be maintained and run by the City Council. He expressed the hope of an honest discussion regarding the issue. Closure of libraries would affect the poorest in terms of access to books and materials and the provision of a safe environment. Libraries were for everyone, from the cradle to the grave and they were free. Sheffield already spent comparatively the least of the largest local authorities on its libraries. He referred to the significance of quotes on the stairwell of the City's Central Library in the context of the Council proceeding with library closures.

The Council referred the petition to Councillor Mazher Iqbal, Cabinet Member for Communities and Inclusion.

(j) Petition Objecting to the Possible Closure of Community Libraries in the City

The Council received an electronic petition containing 5068 signatures objecting to the possible closure of community libraries in the City.

Representations on behalf of the petitioners were made by Diane Leek. She stated that she was in attendance to represent all libraries and that a campaign to save Walkley Library had been one of her first campaigns when she became a City Councillor, which she was for 20 years. This was the third time that she had presented such a petition since 1992. Over thirty thousand people had signed one of the many petitions regarding libraries and it would be wrong to close libraries, because of the impact on the communities which would be affected.

Members had heard today of the value of libraries and that they were at the heart of communities. Broomhill Library, for example, was the City's second most used library. It was not a simple option for people to travel to an alternative library and account had not been taken of the topography of Sheffield and factors including bus fares, peoples' agility and driving ability. Libraries were used for numerous purposes, such as IT access, research, job searching and access to other services. She stated that the Council had been having to make

cuts for many years and it was a matter of how the Council 'cut its cloth'. She asked that proposals be made so that libraries are not set up to fail and that these valued services to which everyone was entitled are retained.

The Council referred the petition to Councillor Mazher Iqbal, Cabinet Member for Communities and Inclusion.

#### 4.3 Petitions Requiring Debate

##### (k) Petitions Objecting to the Possible Closure of Greenhill and Totley Libraries

The Council received a combined petition, containing a total of 6091 signatures, objecting to the possible closure of Greenhill and Totley Libraries. As the combined petition contained more than 5000 signatures and, at the request of the lead petitioners, under the Council's Petitions Scheme, the petition was subject to a public debate by the Council.

Representations on behalf of the Council were made by Tanya East and Matt Kik.

Matt Kik stated that Totley Library was a well-used and valued service and it was the last remaining City Council building in Totley. To travel to the nearest library would require using the bus service to Highfield Library. Totley Library had the highest number of registered users in the City. The area also had many older people who were isolated and those with mental health conditions. Closure of the Library would affect the young people who used the library service and it was used as a meeting place and for school visits. Totley Library was viewed as a lifeline for many people. He commented that other hub libraries in the Council's proposals were within walking distance of the City's Central Library.

Tanya East stated that the Council should reconsider the closure of any library. She said that the savings made would be short sighted and residents were saying to the Council that the libraries must not be closed. She referred to the importance of libraries in encouraging children to read and improving literacy and the long term effects of closing libraries. It was vital she said to invest in libraries for the future prosperity of Sheffield.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 13.1 (b), the Cabinet Member for Communities and Inclusion, Councillor Mazher Iqbal made an initial response to the petitions, followed by the Shadow Cabinet Member for Communities and Inclusion, Councillor David Baker. Members of the City Council then debated the issues raised by the petition. The points made by Members during the debate are summarised below:

Library services were not being cut instead of other services provided by the Council. Children's safeguarding was the only area of Council services for which the budget was being protected. The Council was committed to protecting, as far as possible, front line library services and had done so by such means as reduced hours of opening. Consultation had begun on the delivery of an

affordable and sustainable future library service in line with a long term approach to the budget, which was about taking control. It was recognised that such change was not easy.

The Council had been listening to what people had said during the consultation and community meetings and workshops had taken place. The workshops had included information about how groups might manage libraries and volunteers etc. A number of organisations had said that they had plans as to how they might run libraries. No decision would be made regarding libraries until the outcome of the consultation was known.

The Council had choices in whether it retained libraries or funded other services. There was a recognition that the library service did need to modernise and make better use of volunteers. This might be achieved by working with each individual library area to help the community to support their library.

Libraries were valuable in many ways, including literacy, education and information, provision of community space and facilities for people seeking employment. £1.6 million would need to be saved from the library service budget. Libraries had closed in other parts of the country and some were run by volunteers.

As an organisation, the Council had to do things differently, if it was to remain financially viable. In Walkley, the funding available through the Ward allocation would be used toward library provision. The Council was doing its best to keep libraries open and it was recognised that the proposals represented significant change.

The work of action groups which had been established in support of local libraries was recognised. The strength of feeling represented by the petitions presented to the Council was evident.

The option to establish independent libraries was problematic and should be reconsidered because experiences elsewhere showed that it was difficult to divorce a library from the library service managed by the Council. In Lincolnshire, there were costs of £300K in separating the libraries database. There were hidden costs of the removal of libraries, including social isolation. If libraries were to be run by volunteers, this should be with the support of the Council.

The support of professional library staff was important in a future library service. Whilst consultation had taken place, there was a relatively short period of time given to people who wished to submit a business plan. Cabinet also had a short time to look at and reconsider the issue of the library service.

The members of the public who had attended the Council meeting and taken part in the consultation in relation to libraries were thanked. Whilst the Council may wish to keep all libraries open as at present, this was not possible, given the prolonged period of the Government austerity programme and its effect on funding to local government, which had been subject to a proportionately high level of funding cuts compared to other government departments.

Might not the Council consider other options for the future of libraries and consider other choices in relation to the allocation of funding to services and projects.

There was a good community base, with which the Council can work and if consultation was genuine, then it was likely that some libraries would be saved from closure.

Matt Kik exercised a right of reply in relation to matters raised in the debate. He stated that Libraries were especially important as regards their positive effect on education and employment. Although, in the case of Totley Library, people in the community did not wish to run the library themselves, they would if they had to do so. He asked whether the Council had considered other models, such as reducing the number of hub libraries and maintaining a spread of libraries around the City. He also asked who would decide on what a comprehensive and efficient library service looked like.

Councillor Mazher Iqbal thanked members of the public for attending the meeting to give their views. He stated that this was a period of consultation, which would end on 10 January 2014. He had attended meetings to listen to people's views and he asked people to continue to put forward their views and suggestions as part of the consultation.

**RESOLVED:** On the Motion of Councillor Mazher Iqbal, seconded by Councillor Harry Harpham, that this Council requests that the report to be prepared on the outcome of the library review consultation, together with the views expressed via the 12 petitions submitted to this meeting in relation to libraries and as outlined during this debate on the library review, be submitted to the Economic and Environmental Wellbeing Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee for comment prior to the consideration of the proposals by the Cabinet.

- (l) Petition Requesting the Council to look into a Number of Issues Raised by Taxi Drivers

The Council received a petition containing 240 signatures requesting the Council to look into a number of issues raised by taxi drivers in the City.

The Council referred the petition to Councillor Isobel Bowler, Cabinet Member for Culture, Sport and Leisure.

## **5. HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY**

The Council received a presentation concerning the Sheffield Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2013-18, given by Tim Furness, Director of Business Planning and Partnerships, Sheffield Clinical Commissioning Group and Joe Fowler, Director of Commissioning, Sheffield City Council.

Tim Furness summarised the structure and role of the Sheffield Health and

Wellbeing Board and considered how the Board brings about change through influence, commissioning and work programmes relating to specific areas, such as Health, Disability and Employment or Food and Physical Activity.

He outlined the themes of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), which was the means by which the current and future health, care and wellbeing needs of the local population are assessed.

Joe Fowler addressed the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and how it would make a difference through the integration of health and social care, working to reduce health inequalities and a focus upon on the wider determinants of health. He also outlined how the Health and Wellbeing Board engaged with people in Sheffield.

Members of the City Council asked a number of questions to which responses were given, as follows:

In relation to access to health care, the Board wanted to make sure that there was the same access to healthcare of a high quality, wherever people lived. There were issues for some people in terms of real or perceived barriers to accessing health care. Resources and spending would be targeted to reduce health inequalities and there was intervention to tackle the incidence of particular health conditions.

In relation to integration, the challenge was to bring together the resources of the respective health and social care organisations through open-book discussions. There were potentially greater economies and efficiencies that could be created by working together, although it was not certain that these were adequate given the financial constraints.

The Director of Public Health was a Member of the Health and Wellbeing Board and the model of Public Health in Sheffield was such that it was embedded in the Council. The Director of Public Health also had lead responsibility for the JSNA. The City was largely in line with national policy with regard to the integration of health and social care and, where it was actually ahead of national policy development, it was for the partners in the City collectively to describe what they were doing in terms that were recognised by national Government. Whilst there were national policy and legislative constraints, there was much that could be achieved within those constraints, for example, the introduction of a Selective Licensing scheme in Page Hall, which was the subject of a forthcoming report to the Council's Cabinet. There were other areas in which housing conditions affected peoples' health and where action was possible, such as prevention of damp. Public health expertise might also help shape advice that was given to tenants.

Health inequalities were presently an area of focus for the Health and Wellbeing Board and were likely to be so in the future. Community prevention and intervention were important elements in tackling health inequalities and a risk stratification approach was being used to identify information that was held by GPs and others to ascertain who was at risk of declining health and what action

can be taken. Some activity could be taken though a local action approach and using peer support.

The Clinical Commissioning Group had assumed the former Primary Care Trust (PCT) commitment to tackle health inequalities. It was a relief to see that the allocation formula which the NHS England had adopted included recognition of health inequalities in terms of deprivation. Sheffield had not had funding taken away and it was considered that the representations made by the City had been heard.

The Council noted the presentation on the Sheffield Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the responses to questions now raised and thanked Tim Furness and Joe Fowler for their presentation.

## **6. REPRESENTATION, DELEGATED AUTHORITY AND RELATED ISSUES**

**RESOLVED:** On the Motion of Councillor Pat Midgley, seconded by Councillor Gill Furniss, that (a) approval be given to the following changes to the memberships of Committees, Boards, etc:

Planning and Highways Committee - Councillor Bryan Lodge to replace Councillor Jayne Dunn

Corporate Members Group - Councillor Jillian Creasy to fill a vacancy

(b) representatives be appointed to other bodies, as follows:-

Sheffield Theatres Trust - Remove Councillor Ben Curran to create a vacancy

(c) the appointment of Councillors Tony Damms and Harry Harpham to serve on the Interim Sheffield Council Housing Board and Councillor Tony Damms to serve on the Sheltered Housing Board is confirmed.

## **7. ELECTORAL REVIEW OF SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL: SUBMISSION ON COUNCIL SIZE**

**RESOLVED:** On the Motion of Councillor Chris Weldon, seconded by Councillor Penny Baker, that, as recommended by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee at its meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2013, approval be given to the draft submission on Council size, appended to the report of the Chief Executive now submitted, to be forwarded to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in connection with the Electoral Review of the Council.

## **8. SCRUTINY AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEES - UPDATE REPORT**

The Council received a report providing an overview of activity undertaken during the Municipal Year by each of the Council's Scrutiny and Policy Development Committees. The Committee Chairs (Councillors Gill Furniss, Cate McDonald, Mick Rooney and Chris Weldon) each formally introduced the work of their respective Committees.

The Council received and noted the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee concerning the work undertaken through the Council's Scrutiny and Policy Development Committees so far in 2013/14.

## **9. SOUTH YORKSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER**

The Council received a presentation by the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner, Mr Shaun Wright on the work he had undertaken during his first year in office and the plans for the future. The presentation included an outline of the Police and Crime Commissioner's role and priorities and governance and accountability structures. A summary was given of budget and resources, including savings required as a result of a reduction in Government funding to South Yorkshire Police. The number of Police Community Support Officers was being protected and additional Special Constables were being recruited. Crime statistics for various categories of crime were outlined for both South Yorkshire and Sheffield which showed reduced levels of crime overall. Particular issues were examined, including increases in domestic violence and hate crime, child sexual exploitation and the effect of mental health on the likelihood of becoming a victim of crime. Mr Wright also outlined initiatives such as in relation to tackling child sexual exploitation, victim and witness support, restorative justice, public engagement and the introduction of a living wage for South Yorkshire Police.

Members of the Council asked questions of the Police Crime Commissioner and responses were given, as summarised below:

With regard to community activities for which the Police made a charge for their services, which might put an event at risk on the grounds of cost and may not help community cohesion, Mr Wright stated that the South Yorkshire Police charging policy had been reviewed and the Police would not charge for the 'Fright Night' event. The Home Secretary had been written to with regard to a related grant and, unfortunately, the South Yorkshire Police did not meet the required threshold.

Online harassment, grooming, stalking and bullying affected adults, children and young people and significant additional resources were being applied in South Yorkshire and Yorkshire and Humber, linking into national initiatives.

The contract for the Police Helicopter was being renegotiated with the National Police Air Service and the Police Commissioner stated that he was a member of the working party which was examining value for money with regard to the helicopter service.

In relation to the morale of personnel in South Yorkshire Police and the effect of increased attention on past major incidents, including Hillsborough and Orgreave,

the Police were sometimes subject to criticism, and the Police Crime Commissioner did sometimes also criticise the Police, which might affect morale. However, there was a strategy to help support morale and a small morale fund had been established, which could be bid into to fund particular projects. The Commissioner also went on walkabouts and there was a post box initiative in each police station.

The existing 43 police forces across the country were considered to be too many, given that there was one police force for the whole of Scotland. Some of the existing forces were large enough to stand alone, including South Yorkshire, whereas for other smaller forces, this might not be the case. Issues and choices around the number of forces included the desired level of accountability and the governance model. Reference was made to the recommendations of the Independent Commission into the future of policing, chaired by Lord Stevens.

£40K was given to the South Yorkshire Community Foundation from which bids could be made by groups for up to £2K. The Police Commissioner also made larger grants for projects and small grants were available of up to £10K.

Neighbourhood policing was an issue of ongoing challenge and Commissioner Wright stated that he would like the District Commander to contact Councillor Midgley to look at what may have happened specifically in relation to the Manor Castle Ward. South Yorkshire Police had not removed any resources away from neighbourhood policing.

The Council noted the information reported by the Police Commissioner, Mr Shaun Wright and thanked him for his presentation.

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