

<b>2</b>	<b>Public questions from Nigel Slack</b> <b>(4 in total):</b>	
2.1	<p>Further to my recent questions about the SCC Property Services function, does the fact of the SCC Chief Exec having to take to social media over a weekend to straighten out the confusion created by a poorly drafted notice about Whirlow Brook Hall 'disposal' and a ridiculously short consultation period (over Christmas) further emphasise a service not fit for purpose?</p> <p><b>Answer from Councillor Cate McDonald:</b></p> <p><i>Disposals such as this involve a number of teams from across the Council in this case Parks and Countryside, Property Services and Legal Services. The Council accepts that the statutory notice for Whirlow Hall whilst legally valid, was poorly drafted, and it should have been more specific regarding the basis of the disposal which in this case is a lease of some disused toilets in the grounds of the park. Once it became apparent that the notice had raised concerns, the Council issued an apology. The process has been reviewed and in future the Council will ensure that more detail regarding the nature of the disposal and the extent of the land to which a notice refers is made clear to avoid raising unnecessary concerns. In addition the council will make plans available on line and where there are holiday periods that straddle a notice period the consultation period will reflect this. A revised notice will be published this week and next setting out:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The specific area where the lease is proposed</i></li> <li>• <i>How people can access the plans (online) to view the proposal</i></li> <li>• <i>How people can contact us (electronically) to register objections</i></li> <li>• <i>The revised deadline of 20/01 for objections</i></li> <li>• <i>The revised notice will still refer to a disposal as that is the technical (legal) term used when a lease of longer than 7 years is proposed.</i></li> </ul>	Councillor Cate McDonald

<p>2.2</p>	<p>In the face of incomplete responses to the questions I asked at last meeting, I would ask for a review of the responses so far. Specifically, I would like individual responses to the items in question 1, not just some general comments. An answer to question 2. I would also offer another opportunity for the Exec member to respond to Q4 in light of today's Q1, this time in public please.</p> <p>The briefing attached to this question outlines my comments and concerns about the recent Land and Property Plan passed by the Labour Party members at the last Co-operative Executive Committee Meeting on the 20<sup>th</sup> October 2021, whilst the Green Party Members abstained. The questions below are also embedded in the comments document but are reiterated here for clarity.</p> <p>2.2 (a) Have Exec members had the chance to see and debate the final 'plan' and to approve the document signed off by the Co-operative Executive Member for Finance and Resources?</p> <p>2.2 (b) Who will be the Corporate Landlord in the executive model?</p> <p>2.2 (c) The plan suggests it is “Inspired by successes delivered through our previous plan “Assets for our Communities...”. What examples are there to illustrate this?</p> <p>2.2 (d) There is not a single mention of the City's history &amp; heritage assets at all in this plan. A dangerous and damning omission that undervalues the visitor economy potential for the city in helping “improve lives and create a place which works for Sheffield’s people. “ Will this be addressed in the sub-policies and in which policy area will it fall?</p>	
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	<p>2.2 (e) How will Property Services engage with City residents to make them part of the decision making process?</p> <p>2.2 (f) In modernising the estate will repurposing and refurbishing be at the top of the priorities since, from an environmental point of view, these are generally better options than demolition and new build?</p> <p>2.2 (g) In modernising our city what evidence has been gathered that 'major developments' are still the right solution to the market for workspaces and retail?</p> <p>2.2 (h) In tackling the climate emergency to what outside organisations is Sheffield listening and from what outside sources might investment or other funding be available?</p> <p>2.2 (i) Will the city adopt a 'make the developer pay' approach?</p> <p>2.2 (j) In 'our framework' will council reflect the changing work profile, likely to remain even after the pandemic and reverse the damaging centralisation of services for a more 'neighbourhood' approach for service engagement for the public?</p> <p>2.2 (k) In unlocking money, what work has been done to identify and what are the surplus estate assets proposed for disposal in 2022/23 financial year?</p> <p>2.2 (l) In managing our estate Council commit to “Be transparent in the decisions we take – we recognise the importance of good standards of governance in public authorities and the need for robust processes to guide decision making we will be transparent in the decisions we take to ensure we can legitimately withstand challenge.”</p>	
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	<p>What will this look like?</p> <p>2.2 (m) In the clear approach to asset management, there are so many questions but to highlight just 3:</p> <p><b><i>“Gather, record and maintain information about the estate to provide sufficient information to make decisions</i></b> “ Is this really not available? How have decisions been made in the past without such information?</p> <p><b><i>“Only hold the minimum estate required for service delivery. Reducing inefficient, underutilised and unfit property through timely demolition (where appropriate) and disposal thereby avoiding ongoing associated costs</i></b> “Businesses of all sizes have recognised the danger of being too lean, emergency impacts like the pandemic and the climate emergency need quick responses and that is not possible without a bit of fat in the system. Will Council ensure property decisions are made with this in mind?</p> <p><b><i>“Ensure any lettings for community use are based on sound business cases, meet needs of the community and city and are viable and sustainable</i></b> “What support will be offered to community and social enterprises to ensure a level playing field against corporate interests?</p> <p>2.2 (n) In what success looks like, clarity is needed about the 'range of sources' Council will use to build the evidence base. Is there any clarity available?</p> <p>2.2 (o) “...we will develop measurable targets ...” How did Council measure success up to now? (experience suggests that beyond monetary value they did not).</p> <p>2.2 (p) What is the timeline for these further policy documents?</p> <p>2.2 (q) The vote on the Land &amp; Property Plan was a not a unanimous vote but this is not reflected in the minutes. Why not?</p>	
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Will Council undertake to ensure future votes are recorded votes and published transparently. The minutes as they stand do not reflect the actuality of the vote and could mislead the public.

2.2 (r) When will details of the "...significant engagement..." on the sub-policies be available and what form will this take?

2.2 (s) I was disquieted by the Executive Member for Finance & Resources comments at the last meeting which attempted to suggest that my words in the question that day were somehow intemperate or insulting. I spoke to my experience of Property Services processes and decision making over the last few years and the failings of that department (exemplified by the extraordinary failure to maintain vital Council assets to the tune of £200M+) and the extraordinary disarray around certain decisions on the disposal of heritage properties. I invite the member to apologise for the remarks.

***Answer from councillor Cate McDonald, Executive Member for Finance and Resources (excluding question 2.2q):***

*I have nothing further to add to my previous response.*

*Given at Co-operative Executive held on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2021:*

[Sheffield City Council - Agenda item - Public Questions and Petitions](#)

***Answer from Councillor Julie Grocutt, Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Community Engagement and Governance (Question 2.2q):***

*The Constitution provides for votes to be recorded if one third of the membership of the committee request this. This relates to all votes in formal meetings unless there are specific legislative rules reflected in the constitution requiring otherwise e.g. Council vote on setting the budget. The existence of specific legislative*

<p><i>requirements around recorded votes does indicate that this is expected to be an exception to the rules on decision making rather than the rule. Democracy is demonstrated as decisions are made by a majority vote of the committee and transparency by having published procedure rules explaining how we do things and our meetings being open to the public either in person or via the webcast.</i></p>	
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