

Waste & Street Scene Policy Committee

Meeting held 22 March 2023

PRESENT: Councillors Joe Otten (Chair), Mike Chaplin (Deputy Chair), Alexi Dimond (Group Spokesperson), Tim Huggan, Mark Jones, Nabeela Mowlana, Janet Ridler, Paul Turpin and Cliff Woodcraft

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 No apologies for absence 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 declarations of interest.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

4.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2023 were approved as a correct record.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

5.1 Bridget Ingle attended the Committee and asked the following question:

It is nearly 20 years since Sheffield City Council last entered Britain in Bloom. As a competition it inspires community groups to make positive changes to their local environment through horticultural, environmental and community action. It gives everyone involved a structure to work to, from the council to individuals.

While the proposed volunteer strategy is a step forward, it lacks direction. And that is because there is no overall council strategy. There is no way of evaluating progress for anyone involved.

I am asking the council to lead by example and consider re-entering the Britain in Bloom competition. It will inspire neighbourhoods, community groups and residents in Sheffield to do the same.

The Chair responded with the following answer:

Sheffield proudly won large city in 2008 but unfortunately since then the budgets we spent on Civic floral colour has been completely lost due to financial savings. Without this the city will struggle to compete in the national awards. Sheffield obviously isn't alone on this as the current shortlist for 2023 has very few big cities (see below).

However as part of the volunteering strategy and work already underway with Parks, we are actively encouraging more Friends of Groups to enter Yorkshire in Bloom <https://www.yorkshireinbloom.co.uk/>. We would also like to bring back the Lord Mayor's Awards which were hugely successful in encouraging communities to dress their local areas and then work with partners and community groups such as Sheffield BID and Hillsborough Together to see what can be done in around street dressing and floral colour. A key part of the strategy is to create a post so this becomes someone's responsibility to really enable our communities, identify funding opportunities and can make things just like this happen.

Small City

- Derry, Derry City and Strabane District Council
- Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire
- Oadby and Wigston, Leicestershire
- Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent
- Aberdeen Communities Together, Aberdeenshire
- London Borough of Tower Hamlets, London

6. WORK PROGRAMME

6.1 The Principal Democratic Services Officer introduced the item and drew attention to the recommendations, additions and amendments and the future Work Programme to be agreed moving forwards.

6.2 Members requested that a briefing on safety at sports grounds be added to the work programme for a future meeting.

6.3 RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

1. That the Committee's work programme, as set out in Appendix 1, be agreed, including any additions and amendments identified in Part 1.
2. That consideration be given to the further additions or adjustments to the work programme presented at Part 2 of Appendix 1.
3. That 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.

7. AMENDMENTS TO THE HACKNEY CARRIAGE VEHICLE POLICY

7.1 The Licensing Strategy and Policy Officer introduced a report seeking approval to make several amendments to technical elements of the Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licence Policy, specifically part 9 – Hackney Carriage Vehicle Specification.

The policy would provide clearer information and guidance for applicants on:

- applications
- decision-making
- enforcement

7.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That the proposed amendments to the Hackney Carriage Vehicle Specification be approved to come into force with immediate effect.

7.3 **Reason for decision**

7.3.1 It was recommended that Members approved the amendments to the Hackney Carriage Vehicle Specification in order to allow the licensing of rear-loading vehicles as intended.

7.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

7.4.1 There were no alternative options under consideration.

8. **ENVIRONMENTAL VOLUNTEERING STRATEGY**

8.1 The Volunteer Strategy Project Lead introduced a report which outlined the findings from the work undertaken to develop a new Environmental Volunteering Strategy and sought approval for the new strategy and related action plan.

8.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:**

1. That the Environmental Volunteering Strategy and action plan be approved to continue the progress made with supporting environmental volunteering.
2. That the investigation for funding for a permanent role to carry out this work be supported.

8.3 **Reasons for decisions**

8.3.1 The Council recognises the importance of encouraging participation in caring for and improving our local environment, and that due to budget pressures it is not possible to maintain high standards for our environment across the city alone. Supporting voluntary groups to do the amazing work they do and making it easier for more people to get involved is a priority if we want to improve the lives of people in Sheffield.

8.3.2 We believe that through defining our vision for the future of environmental volunteering across our city, we can work towards shared goals and deliver better support for volunteers. We will shape mutually beneficial relationships where volunteers are more likely to report issues to us instead of acting without our support, which has proved dangerous and often costs the Council more money to rectify issues.

8.3.3 Progress has been made on identifying and forming relationships with

environmental community groups. Now that these groups have been identified, there is now great opportunity to utilise these connections to harness the knowledge and experience they have, to consult on and better inform our policies and ways of working across the Street Scene.

- 8.3.4 Our intended outcomes are to continue to work towards our vision for environmental volunteering in the city:

'To empower and enable all residents of Sheffield, regardless of their background or the area in which they live, to take pride in their local area and work together to care for our environment.'

8.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected

8.4.1 Option 1: Do nothing option/continue without a strategy

Given the investment into Street Scene environmental improvements, and the high-profile nature of environmental issues in the city, as well as the value that volunteers bring to our environment and local communities, it is crucial that the Council has a clear understanding of the needs of communities across Sheffield and that it shapes our future ambitions.

- 8.4.2 One alternative that was considered was to halt future work on improving environmental volunteer relations and continue without a strategy to guide future work. This would mean relying on the good progress made during the engagement projects but committing no further resource or action.

- 8.4.3 However, there is a significant risk that public perception of the Council would be damaged as the work so far has raised expectations for how we work with voluntary groups. It is essential to have a plan to guide our future work with environmental voluntary groups and take hold of the untapped potential that strong relationships with environmental volunteers could bring, doing nothing is therefore not an option.

9. SHEFFIELD MARKETS PERFORMANCE REVIEW

- 9.1 The Interim Operations Manager City Centre Maintenance and Sheffield Markets delivered a presentation to Members providing information on the performance of Sheffield Markets including footfall, occupancy levels, economic impacts, energy costs and the budget and debt positions.

- 9.2 This report was for information and was noted by the Committee.

10. REVIEW OF ENERGY TARIFFS FOR MARKET TRADERS

- 10.1 The Interim Operations Manager City Centre Maintenance and Sheffield Markets introduced a report setting out a range of options regarding the recovery of utilities charges from Moor Market and Crystal Peaks Market tenants. Increases in utility charges had not been passed through to tenants since 2014 and energy prices had risen steeply in recent years. This had created a significant under recovery between the charges paid by tenants and the cost to the council.

10.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:**

1. That an increase in the current tariffs charged to tenants of 50% on electricity and gas be approved.
2. That a period of 12 weeks from the decision being taking to the implementation of the new tariff be agreed.
3. That a review takes place after 6 months to assess the impact of the changes and that proposals be made to the Committee for moving towards full cost recovery on utility costs over the next three years; any proposal to vary the tariff will be brought back to the Committee for decision.

10.3 **Reason for decision**

10.3.1 The Committee rejected the option in 1.6.3 which proposed a 111% uplift on electricity and 107% uplift on gas in favour of the option outlined in 1.6.2 of increasing the current tariff by 50% in order to minimise the impact on business viability. This option would continue to move the charges towards the principle of full cost recovery of utilities costs, while allowing for some subsidy to support tenants to adjust to the increases, which will better allow them to manage costs and charges required to offset the impact on their businesses. This will reduce the potential of businesses needing to leave the market, which in turn reduced financial risk from lost rent or service charges.

10.3.2 The overall outcome should be a more sustainable market, maintaining its quality and service levels, and a high occupancy rate to continue the vibrant feel to the markets post pandemic.

10.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

10.4.1 The option to do nothing (paragraph 1.6.1 in the report) had been rejected due to the unsustainable nature of the increasing subsidy required.

10.4.2 The option to move straight to full cost recovery would be too much of an impact on the tenants. It was likely to create significant cost pressures that were too large to pass straight on to customers and may increase the markets vacancy rate, which would negatively financially impact the budgets for service charges and rents. Overall, it could undermine the financial position rather than improve it.

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