

Agenda Item 4

SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

Strategy and Resources Policy Committee

Meeting held 24 July 2024

PRESENT: Councillors Tom Hunt (Chair), Fran Belbin (Deputy Chair), Angela Argenzio, Kurtis Crossland, Dawn Dale, Dianne Hurst, Douglas Johnson (Group Spokesperson), Abdul Khayum, Ben Miskell, Shaffaq Mohammed (Group Spokesperson), Zahira Naz, Martin Smith and Sophie Thornton (Substitute Member)

13. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

13.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Joe Otten.

14. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

15. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

15.1 There were no declarations of interest.

16. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

16.1 The minutes of the previous meetings held on 30 May 2024 were approved as a correct record.

17. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

17.1 Wing Kam Li attended to present the following questions that she had submitted:

Following my second email inquiry to the FOI on 3 June asking about the names of manufacturers of CCTV and where the CCTV are made which are used in public and government buildings as well as the public question I asked last Wednesday 17 July at the Sheffield council meeting regarding the concerns about potential cybersecurity threats associated with CCTV being used in public and government buildings in Sheffield. One of the main concerns is the creation of backdoor channels by Chinese manufacturers to the Chinese government to remotely access data, and I am going to follow up on the CCTV issue at this Strategic and Resource Policy Committee meeting.

Firstly, I would like to thank Councilor Tom Hunt for his positive response at the Sheffield Council meeting where he stated that one of the considerations was the replacement of existing CCTV at the end of the product's life. However, waiting for the end of a product's life cycle can take years or even ten years, and the challenges are imminent.

I would like to share some information that may assist in identifying potentially effective ways to deal with CCTV issues, and I look forward to hearing from your committee on specific timelines and implementation plans.

If you look inside a CCTV, there is an NVR (network video recorder) that records the video data transmitted from the CCTV and stores it in a format that can be accessed later. The function of NVR is to transmit data and images, and can access data and monitor terminals through the network.

An optimistic approach would be to replace all CCTV within a timetable to ensure there is no risk.

Due to financial considerations, can I ask Sheffield Council to look into ways to replace the NVR? The captured images and data remain in the CCTV, but changing the NVR can cut off data transmission or uploading or downloading activities by unauthorised parties.

Can we try to source NVRs from local suppliers or other countries to address the potential risks posed by products associated with the Chinese government?

Answer: Thank you for attending today. As communicated to you over the last few days, due to the technical nature of the question and the need for further officer investigations, it won't be possible for me to provide a verbal response today, but I will provide a written response in due course.

17.2 Clara Cheung attended to present the following questions that she had submitted:

I would like to extend my gratitude for Councillor Tom Hunt's response last week regarding the inquiry about our sister-city relationship with Chengdu.

Today, I'd like to follow up on the topic of facilitating cultural exchanges with the Early Rain Covenant Church in Chengdu. It is important to recognize that it is not realistic to expect residents of Sheffield to directly contact the Early Rain Covenant Church. The People's Republic of China (PRC) does not afford its citizens religious freedom, and under its national security law, any engagement with foreign individuals could be construed as subversion. This church has been under surveillance and has experienced raids by the PRC authorities. Therefore, any direct contact initiated by individuals in Sheffield could inadvertently place the church members in legal jeopardy.

One safe and feasible way to facilitate such cultural exchanges is for the council to communicate directly with the Chengdu government. If the Chengdu government endorses these cultural exchange activities, it would provide a layer of protection, ensuring that church members can engage with people outside the PRC without the fear of persecution.

Additionally, I would like to update you about Pastor Wang Yi from the Early Rain Covenant Church, based on an online article by Church in Chain dated 26 June 2024. Despite his arrest five years ago, there are no official channels for

the outside world to learn about his situation. The article states, "Wang Yi has only been permitted one family visit since he was detained, a visit from his wife in October 2021. His parents, now in their eighties, have been under surveillance since December 2018 and are only allowed out to walk around their local community." Wang's parents have been permitted to see Wang's wife Jiang Rong once a month, under surveillance. "Chengdu National Security police officers have also carried out a raid on their home, during which they made the elderly couple stand at attention for an extended period." Given these distressing circumstances, I hope the council can help by asking the Chengdu authorities for an update on Pastor Wang Yi's situation.

To provide further context, this situation mirrors the national security law imposed on Hong Kong by the PRC, which the Sheffield councillors may not be fully acquainted with. Under this law, actions perceived as foreign collusion or subversion are subject to severe penalties. Understanding this parallel may help clarify why governmental endorsement is crucial for the protection of human rights in cultural exchanges with Christian Churches in our sister-city Chengdu. Thank you for your support

Answer: Thank you for raising this issue. Freedom of speech and freedom of expression are fundamental human rights that I believe everyone should have. I therefore take the concerns that you have raised very seriously. As I said in my response to your question at Full Council last week, we will need to undertake some enquiries of our own before deciding whether any action should be taken, and we need some time to do this. The Council has already had a call with the China lead at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office about the issues that you have raised, and they agreed to enquire as to whether there were any available updates. I will keep you updated when we have more information.

17.3 Annie O'Gara attended to present the following questions that she had submitted:

The Sheffield City Councillors' Code of Conduct says this: "This Code of Conduct applies to you as soon as you sign your declaration of acceptance of the office of councillor or attend your first meeting as a co-opted member and continues to apply to you until you cease to be a councillor or co-opted member." It says that the Code applies to Councillors when acting in an official capacity.

Can the Chair of this meeting confirm that:

- the Code of Conduct applies to all Councillors present at this meeting today and
- that he will ensure that respectful and non-discriminatory speech is used in line with the Nolan Principles and with Clauses 1.1 and 2.3 of the Council's own Code of Conduct which adopts those principles?

Answer: The Council's code of conduct applies when Councillors are acting in their capacity as councillors of Sheffield City Council. This is a statutory requirement of the Localism Act 2011.

Councillors are each individually responsible for complying with the Code of Conduct. Committee chairs are responsible for maintaining the orderliness of proceedings, and I look forward to the support of councillors in doing that.

17.4 Calvin Payne attended to present the following questions that he had submitted:

1) On December 21st 2023 this committee heard the council report into their progress following the Lowcock inquiry. In the minutes the committee requested a further update on the inquiry recommendations in July 2024. Can the Leader of the Council confirm if, and when, that update will happen?

2) Many of the personal apologies originally promised by the end of October 2023, including to those most affected by the issues raised by Sir Mark, are still outstanding nine months later, despite being further promised to be completed by now in the above mentioned report. Can the Leader of the Council please update on the progress made towards completing the apology process?

Answer: Thank you for your questions. The update report on the inquiry recommendations is due to come to the S&R committee meeting in August. With the exception of the apologies to be given to the 'undertakers', it is my understanding that all personal apologies recommended in the Lowcock report or requested through the agreed process set out within the S&R report in June 2023 have been made. As I know you will understand, the apologies to the 'undertakers' have not yet been completed because there is an outstanding complaint which needs to be resolved before the apologies can be given. An independent review has been commissioned in relation to the complaint and this is due to reach its conclusion shortly. The apologies to the 'undertakers' will be completed as soon as practicable after the independent review report has been received.

17.5 Hilary Smith attended to present the following questions that she had submitted:

You will not be surprised that I have serious concerns about the content and recommendations in the report on the Stand with Palestine petition. I wish to ask that the Council's response to the petition needs to be considered afresh in the light of the ruling of the International Court of Justice on Friday. The World Court has determined that Israel is practicing the crime of apartheid, and this finding should lead Sheffield City Council to reconsider its reluctance to accept the designation of Israel as practicing apartheid against the Palestinian people.

I recognise that the report was written before the ICJ ruling, but I had in any case had serious concerns about the tone and assumptions in the report. For example, point 1.4 frames the report in a way which suggests that the language of genocide and apartheid is not legitimate. The report falsely gives the impression that it is only Amnesty that has determined that Israel is practicing apartheid. I should note here that nothing in the petition's wording suggested that the report by Amnesty was the only human rights organisation which

designated Israel as a state practicing apartheid. For the avoidance of doubt, the following organisations and United Nations special rapporteurs have come to this conclusion:

Al Haq

Btselem

Human Rights Watch

Four successive United Nation Special rapporteurs for the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

This Council has no need to conduct its own investigation into whether or not Israel is practicing the crime of apartheid unless it chooses to reject the findings of every one of these internationally respected human rights organisations and bodies.

The report takes a completely negative view of any step, however minor, that the Council might take towards making Sheffield a city free of complicity with Israel's apartheid. The report is excessively legalistic and risk adverse - a classic 'Yes Minister' approach which I hope and expect that you, as councillors, will today question and challenge. Do not collude with the implications of the report that you have done everything you need to, and that your responsibilities are now ended. That is not the case. Sheffield City council could decide to leave no stone unturned to find ways to reduce its complicity with Israel's apartheid state policies and practices.

The report rejects any possible steps that could be taken, suggesting that because a step might be difficult, or need careful thought, that it should not even be considered.

The author of the report now needs to reconsider in the light of the findings by the President of the International Court of Justice, the highest court in the world, that Israel is practicing the crime of apartheid. I look forward to hearing each of you, members of this committee, make a robust rejection of the report's recommendations today. You are politicians, and you have a duty to act according to the highest ethical standards. The Palestinian people, and respect for international law, deserve nothing less.

I am aware that the leader of the Council will be responding to my question today, but I address my question to each of you on this committee, and to the Chief executive. Each of you carries a heavy responsibility: to ensure that Sheffield City Council plays its part, however small, in ending UK support for Israel's system of apartheid. I ask you today to reconsider the Council's response to the petition in the light of the ruling of the International Court of Justice.

Answer: Thank you for your question. The scenes of devastation in Gaza are heartbreaking and I repeat my call for an urgent ceasefire. It will be important for me not to predetermine my response to the report being discussed on today's agenda, or to suggest a position on behalf of other members of the committee. I will invite officers to advise the committee on whether the ICJ judgement impacts on the recommendations in the report. The Assistant Director Legal and

Governance advised that the report is designed to explore what legal options within the legal framework that the council operates within are available to the meeting today as recommendations from officers, and as such it deals with matters that have a direct impact legally, as a direction on local authorities so may be read as being restricted in that sense. I'm clear that the recommendations formulated and presented to the Committee today are lawful ones that are open for the Committee to adopt or not and explores the issues around those options in a comprehensive fashion.

The Chair confirmed that this matter would be discussed further at item 9 of the agenda.

- 17.6 Jonathan Feldman attended to present the following questions that he had submitted:

The report from the council on the petition notes that the council is not subject to international law specifically that

“matters of international law and war crimes do not fall within the remit of English local government nor are they issues over which the authority has any control ” (para 2.8)

We should note that the invasion of Ukraine is widely considered to be against international law - as set out by article 2 (4) of the Rome Statute - and this did not prevent the rapid statement of support for Ukraine from the council. The war was not a matter over which the Council had control either but one over which it decided it could act locally to mitigate the terrible plight of Ukrainian refugees.

We should also note that the International Court of Justice, in its advisory opinion of 18th July 2024, made in response to questions set by the general assembly of the United Nations in December 2022, states that

... the Court considers that, in view of the character and importance of the rights and obligations involved, all States are under an obligation not to recognize as legal the situation arising from the unlawful presence of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. They are also under an obligation not to render aid or assistance in maintaining the situation created by Israel's illegal presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. It is for all States, while respecting the Charter of the United Nations and international law, to ensure that any impediment resulting from the illegal presence of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to the exercise of the Palestinian people of its right to self-determination is brought to an end. In addition, all the States parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention have the obligation, while respecting the Charter of the United Nations and international law, to ensure compliance by Israel with international humanitarian law as embodied in that Convention.

We should further note that in its ruling on 26th January 2024 the International Court of Justice found it plausible that there had been acts of genocide over which it had jurisdiction and that article 25 (3 d ii) of the Rome Statute, places responsibility on any individual who “in any way contributes” to the crime of

genocide in the knowledge that there is the intention to commit that crime.

As

- (a) Sheffield City Council is a public body constituted under UK law ,
- (b) that the UK is a Party to the Rome Statute giving its rulings status in UK courts.

Sheffield City Council is subject to at least this part of international law and specifically the ruling of the ICC referred to above.

In addition, officers and elected officials are subject to International Law because as individuals they are obligated - as indeed we all are - not to aid and abet a crime against humanity, however indirectly, in so far as we are able.

In view of this clear error in the report will the Strategy and Resources committee review the report? If not why not?

Further

- a) as the Council has delegated authority from the government of the United Kingdom - a State Party to the Rome Statute and
- b) the ICC has said that States must avoid any aid or assistance to Israel;
- and
- c) the Rome Statute obliges natural persons to desist from aiding in any way however indirectly the crime of genocide and
- d) the Council has a duty to protect its officers and elected officials from taking action on its behalf that could lead to their arrest

will this committee move for the Council to engage proactively with the ruling of the ICC and publish a policy that ensures there is no official Council contact either with Israel or its representatives or Israeli institutions or their representatives and discourage business and individuals within the City boundary from doing so too? If not, why not?

Answer: Thank you for your question. The report to be presented to the committee has been prepared by the Council's officers and is aimed at providing the committee with a framework of advice and guidance within which it may consider its options. I am advised that we place reliance on the primary legislative framework of the UK law, as set down by Parliament, to transpose international obligations into the context of local government law and to provide us with an operating framework. I am conscious that the report touches on questions of official and business contact, and I will leave those matters to the item ahead of us on today's agenda. The report has been thoroughly checked, and has been reviewed by an external barrister, to ensure that it is correct and free from errors.

18. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

18.1 There were no Members' questions.

19. RETIREMENT OF STAFF

19.1 The Director of Policy and Democratic Engagement submitted a report on Council staff retirements.

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

(a) places on record its appreciation of the valuable services rendered to the City Council by the following staff in the Directorates below:-

<u>Name</u>	<u>Post</u>	<u>Years' Service</u>
<u>Children's Services</u>		
Anne Bennett	Curriculum Specialist, Lowfield Community Primary School	21
Gina Dale	Senior Teaching Assistant Level 3, Arbourthorne Community Primary School	24
Stephen Douglas	Specialist Teaching Assistant	22
Paula Elliff	Senior Teaching Assistant Level 3, Ecclesall Primary School	23
Linda Etches	Learning Support Assistant and Supervisory Assistant, Shooters Grove Primary School	33
Feona Garrett	Primary School Assistant, Westways Primary School	23
Julie Holmes	Senior Teaching Assistant Level 3, Mossbrook School	25
Nicola Hunter	Senior Teaching Assistant Level 3, Halfway Nursery Infant School	23
Lindsay Tatham	Administration Assistant, Halfway Nursery Infant School	21
Susan Wood	Teaching Assistant Level 2, Angram Bank Primary School	21
<u>City Futures</u>		
Neil Fenwick	Engineer	42
<u>Neighbourhood</u>		

Services

Mark Gill	Gardener	44
Julie Hayward	Business Support Assistant	30

Strategic Support Services

Tina Andrews	Payroll Team Leader	39
Jeremy Hamm	Assistant Team Manager	35

(b) extend to them its best wishes for the future and a long and happy retirement; and

(c) directs that an appropriate extract of the resolution now made, under the Common Seal of the Council, be forwarded to those staff with over 20 years' service.

20. WORK PROGRAMME

20.1 The Committee received a report containing the Committee's Work Programme for consideration and discussion. The aim of the Work Programme is 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. It was highlighted that this is a live document and Members input to it was invaluable.

The report also contained details of a number of cross-cutting issues and proposals for their consideration by Policy Committees.

In addition it was reported that subsequent to the publication of the report that a further two issues had been identified for inclusion in the Work Programme:

- Entering into a Friendship Agreement with the City of Nablus: August 2024
- Annual Ombudsman Report: November 2024

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

(a) approves the Committee's work programme, as set out in Appendix 1, including the additions and amendments identified in Part 1 of the report;

(b) agrees that further issues be included in the work programme in respect of:

- Entering into a Friendship Agreement with the City of Nablus: August 2024

- Annual Ombudsman Report: November 2024; and

(c) approval be given to the consideration of cross cutting issues as detailed in Part 1 of the report.

21. RESPONSE TO THE PETITION REQUESTING THE COUNCIL TO “STAND WITH PALESTINE”

- 21.1 The Chief Executive presented a report providing the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee with advice in relation to the petition asking the council to “stand with Palestine” that has been referred to it by Full Council, and to recommend a course of action for the committee to consider in response to the three requests in the petition.

The report sets out the action that the Committee may take in respect of the three requests in the petition. In doing so, it draws the Committee’s attention to the authority’s responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010, specifically the third strand of the S149 Public Sector Equality Duty around fostering good relationships between different groups. as well as other relevant information, including reminding the committee about the decisions that it took in relation to the report at its meeting on 21 February 2024 on the City Council’s actions in relation to the ongoing conflict in Israel and Palestine.

It was confirmed that the report has been thoroughly checked, and has been reviewed by an external barrister, to ensure that it is correct and free from errors.

The Committee held a long debate on the report, reaffirming their strong feelings as expressed through the cross-party statement of solidarity on 25 March 2024 and again indicated their heartbreaking concerns at the scenes of devastation in Gaza, condemning the ongoing violence in Gaza, and expressing the Council’s solidarity and sympathy for the victims of the violence. The recent ruling of the International Court of Justice was noted, and it was recognised that the Council must place reliance on the primary legislative framework of the UK law, as set down by Parliament, to transpose international obligations into the context of local government law and to provide us with an operating framework.

The Assistant Director Legal and Governance advised that any amendments to the recommendations that would engage Equality Act legislation considerations could not be lawfully adopted today, as officers will not have assessed and proposed what additional considerations arise, and what additional elements and text to such a resolution would be needed to be considered in order to meet the equalities imperatives. No decision could be made “subject to” such a review for lawfulness, as the Equality Act calls for a contemporaneous consideration of the equalities imperatives. On this basis the amendments put forward were not considered.

- 21.2 **RESOLVED:** That Strategy and Resources Policy Committee:-

(a) notes the content of the petition asking the Council to ‘stand with Palestine’, as referred to the committee by Full Council;

(b) notes that points 1 and 3 of the requests made in the petition have been fulfilled, by, respectively, the publication of a cross-party statement of solidarity on 25 March 2024, and the debate that took place on the issues raised by the petition at the Full Council meeting on 6 March 2024; and

(c) In relation to point 2 of the petition:

(1) Note that none of the recommendations of the Amnesty International report referred to in the petition are directed towards Sheffield City Council; note that matters of international law as set out in that report are not within the competence of Sheffield City Council; and further note that, as such, it is not open to the committee to make a designation of the type suggested by the petition.

(2) With the exception of investments, note that none of the actions in the 1981 Statement of Action published by Sheffield City Council as part of declaring Sheffield to be a South African Apartheid Free Zone are ones that the Council could now lawfully take in respect of Israel.

(3) With respect to investments note that in the current Treasury Management Strategy the Council has determined that it will only invest in countries with a defined sovereign credit rating of AA- or above and that this currently excludes Israel, but requests that as part of the next review of the Treasury Management Strategy consideration is given to the issues raised in the petition, along with all other considerations including duties under the Equalities Act 2010, best value, and proper financial management.

(4) Agrees to take no other action in respect of this aspect of the petition.

21.3 Reasons for Decision

21.3.1 The recommendations in the report set out the only action available to the committee in respect of the requests made in the petition presented to Full Council.

21.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected

21.4.1 There are no alternative options available to the committee in respect of this issue

(NOTE: The result of the vote on the resolution was FOR - 11 Members; AGAINST - 0 Members; ABSTENTIONS – 2 Members.

22. STRATEGY AND RESOURCES POLICY COMMITTEE CLIMATE STATEMENT

22.1 The Executive Director City Futures submitted a report containing the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee Climate Statement which:

1. Responds to the Annual Climate Progress Report 2022/23 in a timely manner;
 2. Restates 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; and
 3. Increases 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.
- 22.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That, on the back of the decision taken by this Committee at its meeting held on 13 December 2023 (12.2 (b)) this Committee agrees the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee Climate Statement, as set out in the report, to ensure that the proposed actions contained in such statement are reflected in their Work Programme.
- 22.3 **Reasons for Decision**
- 22.3.1 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.
 - 22.3.2 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.
- 22.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**
- 22.4.1 Not providing committee climate statements considered due to the resource required to collate.
 - 22.4.2 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.
23. **FUTURE SHEFFIELD TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME – BUSINESS CASE FOR CHANGE**
- 23.1 The Chief Operating Officer presented a report, alongside the report for item 12 in the agenda, providing an update on the council's Future Sheffield Transformation programme and work undertaken to date.

The report sets out the proposed next phases of the programme, helping the

council to modernise and improve the ways we work, in order to achieve better outcomes for our city.

The report makes a recommendation to agree the scope of the programme, and also the scale of benefits (financial and non-financial) recent analysis has identified this work can deliver. The final recommendation is to agree that the potential savings are further developed into programme workstreams and reflected in the Council's medium term financial strategy.

23.2 RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That Strategy and Resources Policy Committee:-

(a) notes the work undertaken to date on the Future Sheffield (transformation) programme and agree the scope of the next phases of the programme, as set out in the report;

(b) agrees that the scope of savings identified should be reflected in the medium-term financial strategy and request that the Director of Finance and Commercial Services builds them into the next iteration of the medium-term financial strategy (MTFS); and

(c) agrees the draw down of the earmarked transformation funding to progress with these strategic transformation initiatives and detailed proposals as set out within sections 1.3 - 1.6 of the report (proposals i to xvii).

23.3 Reasons for Decision

23.3.1 The proposals set out in this report form the foundation for a significant programme of transformation and improvement to enable the Council to deliver its priorities within a sustainable medium term financial strategy. The ambition and commitment to improvement and delivery as part of the Future Sheffield Programme links directly to the Council Plan priorities and the 'making it happen' section.

23.3.2 The analysis and the evidence base summarised at appendix 2 provide a clear overview of the scope for delivery, whilst recognising that transformation of the scale is challenging there are many opportunities to develop and modernise the council, improve service delivery and reduce costs.

23.3.3 The scope of the programme blending performance, outcomes and savings (see Figure 2) reflect the challenges of the financial context in which the council operates as well as the requirements of various regulatory bodies and the expectations of the citizens the Council serves

23.3.4 With its 'one council' operating model, Sheffield City Council has set out how it intends to work in a consistent, holistic and partnership orientated manner. By including a focus on strategic capabilities, aligning activity to desired outcome and recognising the importance of both the customer experience and enabling support services, this will support the Council to become an organisation that can deliver the ambition from the Council Plan: to be one of the best

performing councils in the country by 2028.

23.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

- 23.4.1 Do nothing - the Council could choose not to implement the next phases of the Future Sheffield Programme, this has been rejected because the Council would fail to deliver against the medium-term financial strategy, and the commitments set out in the Council Plan
- 23.4.2 Service or directorate-based improvement - the Council could choose to enable individual services areas to develop and implement specific changes associated with savings or improvements within services or directorate budgets. This has been rejected because it would not achieve the 'one council' approach and the holistic outcomes and financial benefits envisaged in the Council Plan or medium-term financial strategy.
- 23.4.3 Centrally defined savings targets by policy committee remit - the Council could choose to allocate savings targets by policy committee remit. This has been rejected as it would not deliver service improvements, the alignment of council services to priorities and would miss opportunities for transformation and the delivery of the ambitions of the Future Sheffield Programme.

24. **FUTURE SHEFFIELD – CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE STRATEGY – A NEW DELIVERY MODEL**

- 24.1 The Chief Operating Officer presented a report, alongside the report for Item 11 in the agenda, setting out the approach the Council is proposing to take in order to successfully implement the Customer Experience Strategy agreed in April 2024.

The Customer model is designed to operate across the whole organisation and has been developed to improve customer experience and outcomes and will have implications for the way services and functions are organised, our ways of working and how customers will be able to interact with the Council.

This report sets out how the Customer Experience Programme, as part of the Future Sheffield Transformation Programme, will enable the Council to deliver key changes in order to successfully implement the model and achieve the vision and priorities included within the Customer Experience Strategy, approved by Strategy and Resources Committee on 17th April 2024.

This report also outlines the key relationships between the Customer Experience Programme and other significant programmes for the Council, including the council-wide Target Operating Model and the Community Engagement programme. The co-ordinated delivery of change across these areas will improve service effectiveness and delivery across the organisation whilst contributing to the robust long-term financial plan for the Council.

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

(a) notes the aims and approach for the council's Customer Experience Programme, alongside its potential benefits to be developed and incorporated into the MTFP;

(b) endorses the focus of the first phase of the Customer Experience Programme, including the service areas prioritised for end-to-end customer journey development alongside the Digital Programme;

(c) agrees to progress further development and delivery of the Customer model, including strengthened leadership for this function and the draw down of earmarked transformation funding to support delivery, realising the model across the Council, and associated benefits; and

(d) agrees for a progress report on delivery by the Customer Experience programme to be presented to the Strategy and Resources Committee in November 2024.

24.3 Reasons for Decision

24.3.1 The Customer Experience Programme, alongside the Digital Programme, is a key pillar of the Council's four-year transformation programme, Future Sheffield, which is aimed at improving service effectiveness and delivery across the organisation whilst creating a robust long-term financial plan for the Council.

24.3.2 Delivering a whole council approach for Customer Experience, as part of the development and implementation of the Council's Target Operating Model, will achieve more joined-up services, greater effectiveness and efficiencies which could not be achieved by individual siloed changes. Areas prioritised for delivery in this phase of the Customer Experience Programme have been selected for their good potential impact and relative ease of delivery. As the Programme progresses, the Council will develop the capabilities and infrastructure to successfully deliver for more sweeping and potentially complex changes.

24.3.3 The Council's Customer model needs to change to deliver against the vision and ambitions of the Customer Experience Strategy. This phase of the Programme will enable our main first points of contact to be optimised and establish solid foundations for further transformation over the medium-to-long term. It will also develop and strengthen capabilities that we have not recently had as a Council, such as how we embed the use of customer feedback and business intelligence to design and deliver services.

24.3.4 By moving from Strategy into delivery, the Customer Experience Programme will begin to demonstrate the benefits and tangible change to the organisation and our communities. This will build the momentum and our ability to deliver wider transformation, with strategic oversight by Future Sheffield Board and the Strategy and Resources Committee.

24.3.5 The whole organisation customer model has been aligned to the development of the target operating model and is a vanguard for how the other aspects of the Target Operating Model will be delivered over the coming months.

24.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected

24.4.1 Do nothing - The Council could choose not to implement the cross-council Customer model and not progress the Customer Experience Programme, thereby continuing to deliver as per existing ways of working. This has been rejected because the Council would fail to deliver against the commitments set out in the Customer Experience Strategy, with the resulting negative impact on demand, costs, the Council's medium-term financial sustainability, and its reputation.

24.4.2 Service by service improvement - The Council could choose to enable individual services areas to develop and implement specific changes associated with the aims and ambitions of the Customer Experience Strategy. This has been rejected because it would not achieve the 'one council' approach and the holistic outcomes and financial benefits envisaged in the Council Plan and the Future Sheffield Programme. In addition, the delivery of change and improved ways of working risks being impeded by operational pressures.

24.4.3 Targeted change projects - The Council could choose to focus resource and capacity on specific cross-council targeted developments outlined in the Customer Experience Strategy. This would have some impact for key customer journeys and services. However, it has been rejected as it would not deliver greater connectivity and consistency for customers, and it would not sufficiently address duplication, fragmentation and gaps across the Council, where there is significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our customer arrangements

25. ENHANCING OUR APPROACH TO ENGAGEMENT WITH CITIZENS AND IN COMMUNITIES

25.1 The Director of Policy and Democratic Engagement submitted a report setting out the Council's approach to delivering on the Council Plan priority of developing "A new approach to community empowerment and engagement, working with our Voluntary, Community and Faith sector partners and through Local Area Committees".

The report does this through:

- setting out a strategic Statement of Intent for this area of work;
- welcoming the leadership being shown by the Governance Committee on the development of our vision and longer-term plan for community engagement
- proposing a set of "Foundations for Good Engagement" to make clear the consistent, core standards of practice we need to have in place ahead of the

Governance Committee's work completing, and to ensure they are building on solid ground.

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

(a) approves the Engagement Statement of Intent, as set out in the report now submitted;

(b) approves the proposed Foundations for Good Engagement, as set out in the report and Appendix 3, as a living document, and delegate authority to the Director of Policy and Democratic Engagement to update these as necessary; and

(c) notes the Governance Committee's work to respond to the recommendations of the Involve report, including the establishment of a Public Involvement Working Group.

25.3 **Reasons for Decision**

25.3.1 This proposal is recommended in order to demonstrate our commitment in a way that enables the Council to be held accountable, and to ensure that the foundations of our approach are in place on which more aspirational work can build.

25.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

25.4.1 One alternative option would be leaving arrangements as they currently are: as set out in this paper this would be unsatisfactory as it would leave the Council in the position of not delivering key priorities in the Council Plan.

25.4.2 A second alternative option would have been to bring a fully worked up engagement framework and approach for endorsement. This was not pursued as it would not reflect our intention of being more open in our approach to engagement: it is preferable that the Governance Committee conduct their work to shape is as is proposed.

26. ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT 2023/2024

26.1 The Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services submitted a report:

(1) Outlining the complaints and compliments Sheffield City Council received in 2023-24 reporting year in line with corporate requirements;

(2) Identifying key trends and developments within complaints; and

(3) Identifying future development and a corporate complaint service improvement plan for 2024-26.

26.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That Strategy and Resources Policy

Committee:-

(a) note the statistical analysis of the annual report and the breakdowns therein including information on the performance of complaints and the issues raised;

(b) agrees that the conclusions and recommendations set out in paragraph 1.15 of this report should form the basis of its written response to the Annual Complaints Report for publication;

(c) notes the links to the Customer Experience Strategy, which will provide the fundamental support and direction needed to improve and transform the way Sheffield City Council handles and manages complaints; and

(d) agrees to provide ongoing support to the implementation and service improvements as outlined in the 2024-2026 Complaint Service Improvement Plan.

26.3 Reasons for Decision

26.3.1 Strategy and Resources Policy Committee has lead responsibility for complaints including monitoring of complaint handling performance on behalf of the Council.

26.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected

26.4.1 Not applicable.

27. 2023/24 FINAL OUT-TURN POSITION

27.1 The Director of Finance & Commercial Services presented a report presenting the financial outturn position for 2023/24.

27.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That Strategy and Resources Policy Committee note the updated information and management actions on the 2023/24 Revenue Budget Outturn as described in this report.

27.3 Reasons for Decision

27.3.1 To record formally changes to the Revenue Budget.

27.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected

27.4.1 The Council is required to both set a balance budget and to ensure that in-year income and expenditure are balanced. No other alternatives were considered.

28. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2025/26 TO 2028/29

28.1 The Director of Finance and Commercial Services presented a report setting out an early view of the medium-term financial position for the Council. This report sets out the scale of mitigations required to offset budget pressures and

will be updated in the autumn following details of work on the future Target Operating Model and budget prioritisation activity.

The setting of a robust and balanced Medium Term Financial Strategy will enable the Council to remain financially sustainable and deliver against the Council Plan.

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

(a) approves the Medium Term Financial Strategy as set out in this report and summarised in Appendix 1;

(b) endorses the proposed approach to ensure the financial sustainability of the Council over the medium term; and

(c) notes the Sheffield City Council Productivity Plan as mentioned in paragraph 1.8 of this report and attached at Appendix 4

28.3 **Reasons for Decision**

28.3.1 The Council is required to both set a balanced budget and to ensure that in-year income and expenditure are balanced. No other alternatives were considered.

28.4 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

28.4.1 No other alternatives were considered.

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