

## Policy Committee Decision Report

<b>Title of Report:</b>	Sheffield Street Trees Inquiry update
<b>Date of Decision:</b>	29 August 2024
<b>Report To:</b>	Strategy and Resources Policy Committee
<b>Report Of:</b>	Chief Executive
<b>Report Author:</b>	James Henderson, Director of Policy and Democratic Engagement

**Executive Summary:** This report provides an update for the committee on progress towards the recommendations made by the Lowcock report into the street trees dispute, and the additional commitments made in the Council's response. The report sets out the good progress that has been made against the substantial majority of the recommendations that were due to be completed by this point. It also explains the reasons that a small number of recommendations have not been completed within the original timescales and describes how these are intended to be progressed and resolved. Finally, it sets out progress against the wider and longer-term recommendations which are not yet due to complete and proposes that these be monitored via the relevant programmes of work that these relate to, including, particularly the Future Sheffield programme.



**Council Plan outcomes:**

[Great neighbourhoods that people are happy to call home](#)

[People live in caring, engaged communities that value diversity and support wellbeing](#)

**Policy Committee remit:**

This report is to be considered by the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee as its remit includes responsibility for any issue identified as being of significant strategic importance or financial risk to the Council (which is considered to be by its nature cross-cutting)

**Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?**

No

## Recommendations:

Strategy and Resources Policy Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the progress made since the last update to the committee in December 2023 towards the actions agreed in the June 2023 'Learning from the past and moving ahead: response to the Sheffield Street Tree Inquiry' report.
2. Note the ongoing work to complete the remaining apologies to those who are owed them, and to note the renewed progress on the work to design and install a commemorative plaque in the Town Hall.
3. Note the underpinning reports that set out in more detail the key activity relating to governance, information management, organisational culture and transformation, and to agree that the remaining actions in these areas should be progressed through the relevant service areas and/or programmes as set out in section 4 of this report, with contingent decisions being made and monitored by the relevant committee.
4. Agree that whilst good progress has been made, the most critical lessons of the street tree dispute are the importance of listening to the people and communities of Sheffield, to hearing different points of view, to reflecting on mistakes and to being open to feedback at all times, and further agrees to commit to an ongoing dialogue with the people of Sheffield as the organisation continues to improve

**Financial Implications:** Yes [Approved by: Matt Ardern]

**Legal Implications:** Yes [Approved by: Andrea Simpson]

**Equality and Inclusion Implications:** Yes [Approved by: Adele Robinson]

Full Equalities Impact Assessment completed with EIA number: 2121

[Tree Inquiry Response EIA.pdf \(sheffield.gov.uk\)](#)

**Climate Change Implications:** Yes

**Background Papers:** [Report of the Sheffield Street Trees Inquiry](#)

[Learning from the past and moving head: response to the Sheffield Street Trees Inquiry](#)

[Street Trees Inquiry Progress Monitoring \(December 2023\)](#)

[Our approach to engagement with citizens and in communities](#)

**Appendices:**

Appendix A – Action Tracker



## 1. Background to the issue

- 1.1 In March 2023, Strategy and Resources Committee formally received Sir Mark Lowcock's independent report into the Sheffield Street Trees Dispute (the [Lowcock Report](#)). Subsequently, in June 2023, the Committee agreed the [Council's response](#) to the recommendations in that report, agreeing to all of the findings and recommendations (and in some cases going beyond what Sir Mark recommended) and setting out an action plan to ensure delivery of the change required.
- 1.2 Part of the next steps agreed in that report were for Strategy and Resources Committee to receive two progress reports to update the committee on the work done to date, the [first of which](#) was considered by the committee in December 2023. This is the second of those two reports.
- 1.3 The [Council Plan](#), agreed by Full Council at its meeting in March 2024, has as one of its key drivers a focus on people: "we will listen, involve and work with the people of our great city. We will celebrate and stand up for the diversity of Sheffield, maximising the assets and strengths of communities, connecting more people into the city's success and creating opportunities for everyone."
- 1.4 As noted in the Lowcock report the Sheffield Street Trees Dispute was a dark period for the city of Sheffield and for Sheffield City Council in particular. As we develop and move forward as an organisation and begin to achieve the ambitions set out in the Council Plan, it is important that we ensure that we are doing all that we said that we would to learn from and avoid any repeat of the dispute. As Sir Mark said in his report: 'identifying a lesson is not the same as learning it'. By setting out the action we have taken and holding ourselves to account for the progress we have made, we seek to ensure that we are truly learning the lessons of that period.
- 1.5 The [original action plan](#) agreed by Strategy and Resources Committee was clear that there are no 'quick fixes'. The underlying issues identified by Sir Mark in his report were ones of culture. Those will take time to change. As such, some of the actions are long term and will require ongoing effort and focus. Good initial work has been made on many of those issues of culture including through the work of the Governance Committee on our formal decision-making arrangements, and through the developing [Future Sheffield transformation programme](#) which will help to create the organisation that we need to be for the future.

- 1.6 This report follows from, and should be read together with, the [interim update](#) considered by Strategy and Resources Policy Committee in December 2023. The focus of this report is on the short- to medium-term actions recommended in the Lowcock report and endorsed by the committee in the original report setting out the council's [action plan from June 2023](#).
- 1.7 These include both actions for the organisation as a whole, on issues such as the provision of personal apologies, and specific actions to support the city's work on exemplary, partnership-driven street tree management.
- 1.8 Progress made against the longer-term actions agreed is also set out in this report, although because of the timescales for some of these actions, the committee should note that it is recommended that these are taken forward in separate pieces of activity.

## 2. Purpose of report

2.1 As with the previous report, Appendix A to this report provides a detailed update on progress against each of the actions agreed by Strategy and Resources Committee in June. The December report indicated that by the time of this report, the committee should have expected further progress on the following topics:

- Installation of the plaque on the Town Hall
- All outstanding apologies will have been made
- The Governance Committee's work on public engagement and involvement will be underway, with initial findings made
- A clear plan developed, linked to the outcomes in the Council Plan, on how we will transform our approach to community engagement and "will listen, involve and work with the people of our great city"
- Constitutional changes required as a result of the Governance Committee's work on public questions will have been made, with other subsequent changes also in place
- All outstanding designs for streets not addressed during the core investment period will be completed and work scheduled

2.2 The remainder of this report sets out the progress on each of the above points, alongside summarising other relevant activity directly related to the recommendations made in the Lowcock report.

## 3 Progress on actions since the December 2023 report

### 3.1 Installation of plaque on the Town Hall

- 3.1.1 Early on in 2024, SCC changed the approach for developing a plaque design following feedback from campaigners. This involved removing the deadline of March 6<sup>th</sup> 2024 to install the plaque and [setting up a task and finish group](#) to move the work forwards. The Task and Finish group will develop and lead a process to agree:
- the wording of a design brief for the plaque
  - how to commission the plaque design,
  - the approach for a wider public consultation process
- 3.1.2 The group will then make their recommendations to the Strategy and Resources Committee. Sheffield City Council will retain responsibility for commissioning the designs, running a public consultation on those designs, and taking forward the selected design to manufacture and installation.
- 3.1.3 The Task and Finish group has met on the 18<sup>th</sup> July with 16 members present, and, working with an independent facilitator, agreed the ground rules for continued collaboration, selected the Chairs of the group, agreed how the group will work with the Chair/s over the following series of meetings and clarified the next steps.
- 3.1.4 A further Task and Finish Group meeting took place on the 12<sup>th</sup> August.

## 3.2 Outstanding apologies

- 3.2.1 With the exception of those who were subject to legal action during the dispute (see paragraph 3.2.2), all apologies from members of the public that were requested through the process agreed by the committee have now been made. In total, apologies to fourteen individuals have been made, of which 8 were provided in written form and 6 were delivered verbally. Those apologies have been provided by the Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive or the Director of Policy and Democratic Engagement.
- 3.2.2 As Sir Mark's report sets out, a number of people were subject to legal action by the Council. Some made undertakings to the court during the course of the dispute and others were the subject of injunctions and committal proceedings. The Council accepted the recommendation that an apology should be made to those individuals, and a process has been put in place to do this. That process has not yet completed. In the process of issuing those apologies it became apparent that notwithstanding the finding of the Inquiry, those apologies could not be effectively given unless a small number of complaints received before the Inquiry were resolved. Those were complaints under the Council's corporate

Complaint process. The Council has appointed an independent investigator to report back on those complaints. That investigation has taken longer than anticipated as it has been afforded access to significant Council documentation and has conducted interviews widely. process. It is proposed that once that investigation report has been received and the complaint has been resolved the remaining apologies owed will made, and an explanation to this effect should be added to the Street Tree Inquiry page on the Council's website.

- 3.2.3 At the point of the December 2023 report, an apology had not been made to the courts. This was a recommendation from the Lowcock report. In January 2024, the Chief Executive and General Counsel wrote to the Lord Chancellor to provide that apology.

### 3.3 Sheffield City Council's approach to public engagement

- 3.3.1 One of the areas of focus in the Lowcock report was the council's approach to public engagement during the course of the dispute. These issues were also highlighted in other reports (including the [LGA Peer Review](#) and the [Race Equality Commission](#) report).
- 3.3.2 Since publication of the Lowcock report there has been substantial activity to improve community engagement practice in the council. Some of this was set out in the report to the committee in December 2023, including the work that the Governance Committee undertook as part of the transition to the committee system.
- 3.3.3 Over the last six months, further substantial progress has been made. At the last Strategy and Resources Committee on 24 July 2024, a new statement of [strategic intent for community engagement](#) was agreed, alongside a new set of 'foundations for good engagement' which will act as a practical tool for practitioners across the authority. A community of practice for community engagement within the council has been established to share learning and ensure consistency in approach. And, closely linked to the work on community engagement, the Strategy and Resources Committee has also approved a new [Customer Experience strategy](#) and delivery approach for the authority as part of the Future Sheffield programme.
- 3.3.4 Furthermore, the Governance Committee have taken a leadership role in improving the council's approach to community engagement. They have established a [Working Group](#) to be comprised of Elected Members, relevant officers, and partners, [to co-produce a](#)



[vision and longer-term plan for the Council's approach to engagement and participation](#). This will be produced over the course of this municipal year.

- 3.3.5 The work on [community engagement](#) is also a core element of the Future Sheffield programme of work which will support the transformation of the organisation to ensure that we deliver effectively for the people of Sheffield. As noted in the report considered by the committee in July, “excellent, effective citizen engagement is a vital tool in developing the intelligence we need to design and deliver effective services that meet people’s needs, and to help shape places that are great for people to live in. A strong approach to engagement provides a key interface between the Council and citizens of Sheffield, helping us to build understanding and trust.”

### 3.4 New approach to public questions

- 3.4.1 Following significant work undertaken by the Governance Committee to improve the [council's approach to public questions](#) at council meetings, Full Council agreed to a set of constitutional changes to enact these recommendations at their Annual General Meeting in May 2024. It is intended that the new system will make it easier for people to submit public questions and to make statements, and generally engage with the work of the council through its policy committees and Full Council meetings.
- 3.4.2 Because of the timing of the General Election, it was not possible to bring the new approach into operation immediately, but this is being introduced from the current round of committee and Full Council meetings. This will be kept under review during the course of this municipal year (2024/25) to ensure that it is working effectively.

### 3.5 Designs for streets not addressed during the core investment period

- 3.5.1 The Committee agreed in June 2023 that improving the standard of roads outstanding from 2018 was a priority. As such, it committed that designs for the outstanding streets not completed during the Core Investment Period of the Streets Ahead programme should be in place by March 2024. This milestone has been achieved.
- 3.5.2 Consultation on the first phase of designs was completed earlier this year. This included 3 streets: Banner Cross Road, Dunkeld Road and Silver Hill Road. The outcome of this consultation showed sufficient support for Silver Hill Road to enable it to proceed

through to construction whilst both Banner Cross Road and Dunkeld Road did not receive as much support.

- 3.5.3 Officers have agreed a programme with the Sheffield Street Trees Partnership (SSTP) to deliver Silver Hill Road by Autumn this year (2024) subject to road space availability.
- 3.5.4 Officers have also undertaken a review of the feedback received for both Banner cross Road and Dunkeld Road. This feedback will be shared with SSTP. The feedback will incur further changes to the designs, but further assessment on the impact to any trees is required.
- 3.5.5 The Council, in collaboration with the SSTP, has reviewed its programme for the remaining Core Investment Period streets based on experience from the first phase of the consultation. This consists of re-shaping the consultation process and approach for the remaining phases.
- 3.5.6 Officers have established a categorisation of streets using a RAG status based on the impact of proposed designs to each of the streets, with green category streets considered to be low impact and red category streets determined to have a higher impact.
- 3.5.7 The impact of the design for each street is determined by the following criteria:
- Presence of known root tracks / shallow rooting in the carriageway edge where we have ground penetrating radar or trial hole data
  - Known complications shown on the topographical surveys, especially around drainage
  - Observations of prevailing parking levels
  - Percentage of properties with driveways or other off-street parking available
  - Percentage of parking lost versus prevailing parking demand observations.
  - Severity of extent of engineering solutions proposed
- 3.5.8 Delivery of low impact category streets will be through a localised letter dropping activity around affected premises for a period of three weeks in advance of any works being scheduled. This is in accordance with standard practice for Strategic Transport schemes such as traffic calming and junction improvements. Works are programmed to start in the autumn and progress into early winter. A total of 8 streets are identified within this category.

- 3.5.9 A workshop was held in July 2024 with the chair of the SSTP to discuss the options to consider for Banner Cross Road, Dunkeld Road and at high level, the other medium and high impact streets. Given the complexity of the designs, the impact on residents and trees, it was agreed that an options report would be procured to capture at strategic level any alternative options that could be considered. Officers are working collaboratively with colleagues in the council's Strategic Transport and Infrastructure Department to develop a brief that will ensure options are assessed within a framework that captures sustainability, Health and Safety for both workers and road users, and cost.
- 3.5.10 Officers are currently finalising a series of letters that will be issued to residents of each of the 26 streets outlining the way forward based on the approach outlined above. These letters have been agreed with SSTP and approved by senior Council officers. Members have also been briefed.
- 3.5.11 Given some of the challenges surrounding these streets, the council recognises that all CIP streets will not be delivered by the March 2025 deadline as specified in the June 2023 report to this committee. The approach adopted to re-categorise the streets and procure an options report goes some way to mitigate any further delays beyond the March 2025 deadline.
- 3.5.12 In addition to this, additional costs will be incurred to produce the Options Report. There remains a risk of further costs associated with undertaking revised designs following the outcome of the Options report.

#### **4. Progress on other agreed recommendations**

- 4.1 Alongside the core actions set out in section 3 above, important progress has also been made on a number of other, longer-term recommendations agreed by the committee in June 2023.
- 4.2 Investigate how to support the Sheffield Street Tree Partnership to continue to develop and continuously improve including looking at: decision making, elected member engagement, information sharing, external scrutiny and status**
- 4.2.1 Activity has been completed for all of these actions, and supporting the SSTP to develop and continuously improve has been incorporated into the Street Scene and Regulation Business Plan.

- 4.2.2 **Supporting SSTP improvement activity** including refreshing the SSTP Terms of Reference; SSTP website launch; developing a Partnership Charter; facilitating twice yearly SSTP Awaydays; grant funding a Partnership & University of Sheffield led project to develop a key SSTP priority (the Strategic Planting Palette); and broadening membership of SSTP.
- 4.2.3 **Decision Making** – decision making flow charts were agreed with SSTP for the consultation process on Core Investment Period designs, and will evolve with the programme. SCC has taken part in constructive Partnership discussions on ‘what good looks like’.
- 4.2.4 **Elected Member engagement** sessions were held during summer 2023 to help councillors understand the work of SSTP and how to engage with it. Lead members from the Waste & Street Scene Policy Committee attended the September SSTP meeting for a constructive discussion on how elected members can support the Partnership’s work.
- 4.2.5 **Information sharing** - Implementation of Non-Disclosure Agreements to enable better information sharing with Partners around 3rd Party Tree reports for subsidence issues.
- 4.2.6 **External Scrutiny and Accreditation** – Sheffield’s ‘Tree City of the World’ Status has been maintained for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year in a row. Seeking further independent accreditation is included as an action in the Partnership’s forward plan.
- 4.2.7 **Status** – In November 2023 SCC grant funded Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust to host and manage the Partnership Manager role for a trial period of 12 months, providing greater autonomy for the Partnership. Considering constitution of the Partnership is included in the Partnership’s Forward Plan and SCC is ready to provide support when the Partnership is ready to start this work.
- 4.3 **Comprehensive analysis of the capacity and skills needed to manage the Streets Ahead contract strategically across the next 14 years AND Update and keep as a living document the Streets Ahead business case, in line with best practice**
- 4.3.1 The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) has been commissioned to carry out a health check of the Streets Ahead contract. Work is ongoing and a draft report is expected well in advance of the April 2025 deadline for this action.

4.3.2 As part of this work, CIPFA will be asked to advise on any changes needed to the business case as part of this contract health check.

4.3.3 The council appointed a new Assistant Director for Highways Maintenance in January 2024 who transitioned into the role in March this year. The previous post had responsibility for both Highways and Waste Management however in response to the Lowcock Report a dedicated post has been created due to the complexity of the Highway's service. Waste Management will sit under another Assistant Director at no further cost.

4.3.4 The council are now in the process of undertaking an analysis of capacity and skills by reviewing the team structure, identifying areas of recruitment whilst also liaising with Amey to focus on areas of improvement with respect to operations and delivery. The council is on track to finalise the analysis on capacity and skills by April 25 as set out in the June 2023 report.

#### **4.4 Develop high-level principles to set the approach for planning the end of the contract in 2037 at least 7 years in advance of the end of the contract**

4.4.1 The council has opened discussions with Amey on high level principles related to hand back of assets, whilst we acknowledge this is not required until 7 years in advance of the contract, the council realises the importance having a plan in place for this work.

#### **4.5 Commission case studies which exemplify the issues highlighted by a range of reports and the good practice which exists across the organisation (particularly on partnership working)**

4.5.1 As part of the work on community engagement (see section 3.3 above) and as reported to Strategy and Resources Policy Committee in July 2024, a [range of examples](#) was presented of current practice in the way in which the council (both on its own and with partners) involves communities in policy and project development and in service design and delivery. The community engagement report set out some lessons that should be drawn from these examples of practice as follows:

- Working in the open can have real benefits for building trust
- Trust is also built by being open and honest about the restrictions we are under, but flexible about how we work within them

- Engagement is not necessarily comfortable, but that can be necessary to make progress
- We need to invest in building connections to local communities and opportunities, and working to coordinate activity
- Where we build relationships constructively and with a joint purpose in mind this can lead to joint delivery
- There are real benefits of sharing power with people with lived experience in shaping strategy and service delivery
- We can make a bigger impact by bringing our resources and skills together with the insight, understanding and energy of the people we are working with
- Investing real time and resource into this work is necessary to get the most out of it

4.5.2 These learning points speak directly to the findings set out in the Lowcock report. Through the work that is being done on community engagement and wider models of participation, the learning points will be embedded and developed across the organisation through the new community of practice that has been established.

#### **4.6 Further develop and implement an employee engagement strategy AND create a Senior Manager Pledge**

4.6.1 As an organisation we have recognised the need to develop a holistic employee engagement strategy which is resourced and as such we have created, under the Director of People and Organisational Culture, a new Employee Engagement and Inclusion service function, which will be headed by a senior service leader. Recruitment for this senior position is currently on-going.

4.6.2 The focus for this service area will be looking at the overall employee engagement, inclusion and health and well-being. The employee engagement strategy will form a key part of the People Strategy, currently being co-designed with the service area and wider organisation and will be endorsed by the Future Sheffield board. Since the last update an employee engagement platform has been procured and implemented this provides the opportunity for anonymous employee surveys and a feature whereby employees can submit anonymous questions for response. The aim of this platform is to provide a secure and trusted route for employees to feedback and ask questions. Departmental action plans resulting from the employee survey have been created and shared with the workforce.

4.6.3 The council's values are clearly set out and used routinely as part of the council's internal communications strategies and activities such

as recruitment. Leadership Development has been commissioned (encompassing senior management) and this will establish a full behavioural framework aligned with the council's values and to be used as part of the accountability and performance management framework, all managers are expected to adhere to and demonstrate the values and behaviours set out.

#### **4.7 Embed ways of working which support good information management and communication**

- 4.7.1 Since publication of the Lowcock report there has been substantial activity with improving both the information management systems and how information is shared with the public. As noted in the last report, the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) conducted a [consensual audit](#) of the Council's information management procedures in summer 2023. The audit focused on compliance with Freedom of Information legislation and gave the council a 'reasonable'<sup>1</sup> assurance.
- 4.7.2 Policies and procedures for handling information requests have been reviewed and updated, in line with recommendations from the ICO. This includes a clearer process for sign-off of information requests.
- 4.7.3 The council has an active programme of development to ensure all service areas are storing business information on Sharepoint or case management systems so that it easily located and retrieved. The retention schedule has been reviewed and updated so that staff are clear on how long information should be kept.
- 4.7.4 The council has invested in improving its training of all staff on handling information requests. In addition, there is a programme of specialist training on exemptions for relevant staff.
- 4.7.5 Furthermore, the council has invested in a review of the operating model of the Information Management team, as part of the overall strategic plan, which includes the resourcing of staff, processes and technology.
- 4.7.6 Action has also been taken to reduce the backlog of information requests. There are no requests that are older than 12 months and this is being further improved on a weekly basis by a dedicated team.

#### **4.8 Take forward actions identified by the report to audit and standards committee on the standards regime and Councillor Code of Conduct**

4.8.1 In February 2024, [Full Council approved changes](#) to the Procedure for Dealing with Standards Complaints and the Councillor Code of Conduct following a [review of them by Audit & Standards](#) in November 2023. This was as a direct result of the action agreed by Strategy and Resources Policy Committee in June 2023 in response to the findings and recommendations of the Street Tree Inquiry and that the Constitution has been updated accordingly.

4.8.2 Full Council considered the [annual report](#) of the Audit and Standards Committee at its meeting in July 2024, and the committee will continue to keep the standards regime and Councillor Code of Conduct under review.

#### **4.9 Commence assessing the relative merits of different models for overseeing large scale contracts**

4.9.1 The next phase of the council's improvement and transformation programme (Future Sheffield) will review the council's approach to contract management and procurement. This work is due to start in Q2 2024/5. Recommendations and progress will be formally reported to the Strategy and Resources Committee, with oversight by the Future Sheffield Members Working Group.

#### **4.10 Commence investigating how we enable peer support between organisations with similar governance responsibilities**

4.10.1 To date work has been undertaken with one other authority using a similar governance framework, and we are actively considering further opportunities for peer support. Comparative work was undertaken in a review of governance undertaken in 2024 and going forward peer review and engagement will be mainstreamed.

### **5. How does this decision contribute to the Council Plan?**

#### **5.1 Council Plan outcomes**

5.1.1 This report responds directly to the priorities set out in the Council Plan 2024-28.

5.1.2 The Plan describes the council's commitment to 'a renewed relationship with Sheffielders, driven by trust, compassion and a desire to work together'. It describes the importance of revitalising our approach to community engagement, recognising the ideas, energy, commitment and value that our residents bring. And that we need to be focused on transforming our relationship with



communities and residents to one in which we work to address opportunities and challenges together.

- 5.1.3 This report and the work responding to the Lowcock Inquiry, is a fundamental part of what the council is doing to rebuild and renew the relationship with the people of Sheffield, by building trust, following through on the things that we said that we would do, and taking steps to reform the culture of the organisation and to put people at the heart of what we do.

### 3.2 People – Prosperity - Planet

*Guidance: For all decisions, you should describe how the Council's policy triple-lock (People, Prosperity and Planet) have been actively considered. Details of the triple-lock are set out in the Council Plan*

- 4.1.1 **People:** the Council Plan is clear that we need to listen, involve and work with the people of our great city. The response to the Lowcock report and the subsequent actions resulting from that has at its heart the need to rebuild trust and confidence with the people and communities of Sheffield and to value the expertise and perspectives that they have, in a way which was not always evident during the Street Trees dispute.
- 4.1.2 **Prosperity:** Part of the response to the Street Tree Inquiry is concerned with ensuring that the council is well placed in future to deliver major projects that have substantial economic benefit for the city. By maximising the benefits from the remaining period of the Streets Ahead programme, and doing that in a way that includes and involves communities, we will contribute significantly to the overall prosperity of the city.
- 4.1.3 **Planet:** The report demonstrates that through the work of the Sheffield Street Tree Partnership the significant positive environmental impact of the work. This includes, but is not limited to, the work of the Partnership in valuing the city's urban forest; the active consideration of biodiversity and species mix; and the overall positive climate and air quality impact of the activity. This is set out in more detail in the Climate Impact Assessment.

## **6. What community or partner engagement has been undertaken and how has it informed the proposal?**

- 6.1 There has been no direct consultation undertaken directly to inform this update report, other than the work referenced above relating to the Town

Hall plaque and engagement with Sheffield Street Trees Partnership. However, we recognise that the most critical lessons of the street tree dispute are the importance of listening to the people and communities of Sheffield, to hearing different points of view, to reflecting on mistakes and to being open to feedback at all times.

- 6.2 The recommendations and actions that are being reported against were developed using Sir Mark Lowcock's Inquiry report as a foundation. The Inquiry received and reviewed significant amounts of documentation and met with 159 people in private and 26 people at 32 hours of public hearings.
- 6.3 The development of the actions was further supported by engagement with individuals and services across the Council, including senior management and elected members; Amey; representations from individuals and representative groups; an Implementation Working Group with attendees external to the Council; and the Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) on 10 May 2023, and the discussion sessions that followed it, which compiled views on implementation of the Streets Ahead recommendations.
- 6.4 Improving the council's approach to engagement and involvement is a key element of the actions agreed following the publication of the Inquiry report. An update on the substantive progress on this work is provided above.

## **7. What alternative options did we consider?**

### **7.1 Alternative Option: Not to provide an update report**

- 7.1.1 It would have been possible not to provide a further update report to Strategy and Resources Policy Committee on this matter. This was dismissed because of the direct request of the committee for a further report on progress at this point, and because of the degree of public interest in the street tree dispute and the Lowcock Inquiry, and the Council's ongoing commitment to learn lessons and take action in response to the recommendations.

## **8. How has equality, diversity and inclusion been actively considered?**

- 8.1 There are no new equality impacts arising from this report that were not noted as part of the Equality Impact Assessment that was conducted for the June 2023 report. That EIA remains a live document and is reviewed and updated as required to ensure a full and current picture of the equalities implications of this work.

## 9. Financial and Commercial Implications

9.1 There are no new financial or commercial implications in this report. The activity described in the report has been funded through existing budgets and funding identified in the June 2023 report to Strategy & Resources Policy Committee to facilitate the report's recommendations.

## 10. Legal Implications

10.1 There are no new legal implications arising from this report beyond those considered by the committee in June 2023 and December 2023.

## 11. Climate and Environmental Implications

11.1 There are no new climate or environmental implications of this report beyond those noted in the June 2023 report. At that point it was not considered necessary to conduct a full Climate Impact Assessment, but the climate and environmental implications were considered against the categories used in the CIA tool. These are set out again below for the committee's benefit.

11.2 **Influence.** The actions within this report support the actions of the Sheffield Street Trees Partnership's (STTP) Strategy. STTP Strategy includes raising awareness of the benefits and value of street trees and driving community engagement with how they can be looked after. This is supported by community events such as the recent Tree Fayre and the new STTP website. The Strategy sees the Council working with partners to achieve aims including increasing the street tree canopy including increasing the benefits of this in low-cover and deprived areas.

11.3 **Nature and Land Use.** Increasing the street tree canopy will add to the city's green infrastructure and have a beneficial effect on carbon capture, and make sure tree planting considers climate resilience and contribution to biodiversity, as well as aesthetic appeal.

11.4 **Adaptation.** Increasing the street tree canopy including increasing the benefits of this in low-cover and deprived areas ensure the principle of Just Transition can be applied. Increased canopy cover can also help reduce the heat island effect during extreme heat events and improve the resilience of the city in the face of the impacts of climate change. It will be important to consider the predicted climate changes for the city in terms of average temperatures and rainfall when considering species suitability.

11.5 **Other climate or environmental implications.** The actions within this report do not have buildings and infrastructure, transport, economy, energy, resource use or waste implications.

## 12. Other implications

12.1 There are no other implications arising from this report.

## 13. Reasons for decision

13.1 There has been substantial progress towards the recommendations for Sheffield City Council as set out in the Lowcock and subsequently agreed by Strategy and Resources Committee in June 2023.

13.2 This progress includes taking forward actions across the themes of reconciliation, Streets Ahead, and the wider council, and means that the actions that were recommended to have been taken by this point are now substantially completed. As such, it is not proposed that a further report is brought to the committee, but that the remaining actions are taken forward within other workstreams (including, particularly, the Future Sheffield programme which will drive the wider transformation of the organisation).

13.3 Although the immediate actions recommended by Sir Mark in his report have now been completed, it will take concerted ongoing effort to fully respond to the findings of the report and to reset the council's relationship with communities and to regain trust with those who were let down by the council's approach during the street trees dispute.