

# Question 1



**Public Question for Council – Wednesday 24 January 2024**

## **North Bridge Street**

Sarah Newton, a resident of Sunderland, has submitted the following question.

“There is so much regeneration going on around the city, however North Bridge Street is the heart of the city, the main road leading into the city centre / Wearmouth Bridge. Concert goers, football fans and the residents of Sunderland all access this road and comment on the dire state it is in. With the city centre / Sheepfolds regeneration, do you think North Bridge Street should also be looked at and landlords / tenants / derelict sites be reviewed to try and regenerate this major street?”

Assistant Director of Law and Governance

## **Response**

The Government position of ending the Cost-of-Living payments and the Household support Fund is extremely disappointing.

Along with other Councils and charities across the UK we are very concerned about what appears to be a premature ending of these two major support schemes while the cost-of-living crisis is still ongoing.

Due to the concerns about these changes the Portfolio Holder has written to the Secretary of State for Work & Pensions to ask for clarity on the rationale and the position of these schemes going forward.

The loss of these funding programmes at this time will leave many more residents in crisis situations and we will not be able to help our residents in a way we have done in previous years.

In terms of the value and impact of these funding programmes, we have assessed the value of the 3 separate Cost of Living payments for Sunderland residents made by the DWP in 2023 -2024 is worth an estimated £55m of support.

Between October 2021 and March 2024, the council will have spent over £13.4 million providing Household Support Funding support. For the current 4th round of HSF funding we will spend the allocated budget of £5.347 million supporting over 50,000 households with financial awards.

There will be a range of known impacts when these programmes end. Those areas previously supported which will no longer receive support are:

- The automatic payments via schools to Free School Meals pupils to provide holiday support for each of the 3 major holidays

- The automatic payments to many low income, vulnerable households' known to the council and that receive Adult Social Care Services, Council Tax Support or Housing Benefit
- No additional funding to support the Councils Local Welfare Provision Scheme which provides crisis support
- Support to food banks / food aid providers to enable them to supplement their offers and manage increased demands

We are now reviewing ways in which we can identify and support residents that may face a future financial crisis and we will continue to do everything we can to help and support our residents.

## Question 2



**Public Question for Council – Wednesday 24 January 2024**

### **Road Safety Hollycarrside**

Helen Glancy, a resident of Sunderland, has submitted the following question.

“How is the council ensuring the road safety of the children of Hollycarrside?”

Assistant Director of Law and Governance

### **Response**

Officers have carried out a public engagement exercise on a traffic calming scheme on Hollycarrside Road and Hewitt Avenue with an update being sent to the residents in the coming days. Officers will continue to investigate all requests for service and look to improve road safety where feasible.

## Question 3



**Public Question for Council – Wednesday 24 January 2024**

### **Chipchase, Washington**

Brandon Feeley, a resident of Sunderland, has submitted the following question.

“Can Sunderland Council provide an update on the Road Surface in Chipchase, Washington?”

Assistant Director of Law and Governance

### **Response**

The council is aware of the condition of the road surface in Chipchase and is currently in discussions with the surfacing contractor regarding a resolution to the issue. Members will be updated as soon as possible.

## Question 4

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### **Sheepfolds Footbridge**

Stephen Cuthbert, a resident of Sunderland, has submitted the following question.

“Having failed to get central government funding to cover the costs of the Sheepfolds footbridge and understanding that a number of physical modifications to the foundations have already been carried out adding to the advertised costs. There is no money in the city's budget going forward?

Can the taxpayers expect the leader to go cap in hand to L&G for a loan and add further burden to the city's already escalating debts for this white elephant project?”

Assistant Director of Law and Governance

### **Response**

The New Wear Footbridge is a critical element of the Riverside Sunderland regeneration and through the Council's investment in this and associated infrastructure enhancements across the regeneration area significant public and private sector investment is being secured in the wider masterplan which is enabling the delivery of up to 1,000 new homes, 1million sq ft of employment space and a host of leisure and cultural facilities.

The construction of the New Wear Footbridge is progressing at pace and in line with the approved budget. There is therefore no requirement for additional Council funding or any private sector investment.

We look forward to the arrival of the steelwork for the bridge later this year and the successful opening of this transformational piece of sustainable infrastructure that supports the Council's active travel, low carbon, and economic growth objectives, and unlocks the real potential of the Sheepfolds neighbourhood in 2025 along with Keel Square.

No-one will be going cap in hand to L&G for a loan. The City's budget is in a good place.

## Question 5



**Public Question for Council – Wednesday 24 January 2024**

### **Defibrillator Central Station**

Mavis Owen, a resident of Sunderland, has submitted the following question.

“Why do we not have a defibrillator on the platform on the new central rail station? By the time someone finds one on the City Centre someone could lose their lives. I have experienced, in 2021 or 2022 , someone having a heart attack on a train which is very life threatening. Please consider this request”

Assistant Director of Law and Governance

### **Response**

Each defibrillator that is placed within the North East covers a radius of 500 meters as determined by the ambulance service area. The central railway station in Sunderland, although does not have a defibrillator within the platform does have 7 24 hour access defibrillators within 500m of the railway station, and a further 4 defibrillators that have a varied access. Varied access is due to the location, for example being inside of a shopping centre so it is therefore only open between specified times.

Please be assured I will be working closely with the comms team to look at signage within the railway station to allow people to identify their closest defibrillator.

## Question 6

**Public Question for Council – Wednesday 24 January 2024**

### **Seaburn Developments**

Andy Stafford, a resident of Sunderland, has submitted the following question.

“What impact has the recent regeneration in Seaburn, including the new Tram Shelter and other developments, had on jobs and the local economy?”

Assistant Director of Law and Governance

### **Response**

The recent regeneration in Seaburn has secured over £30m of private sector investment creating over 200 direct jobs and several hundred more in the construction industry and the supply chain that services the seafront economy, safeguarding and providing much valued career opportunities for local people.

The development of new housing at Lowry Park and business investments such as The Seaburn Inn, Stack Seaburn, and the Tram Shelter have increased income from council tax and business rates, significantly increased visitor numbers and overnight stays, and expenditure in the local daytime and nighttime economy.

With further investment planned in a high-quality children’s play area that will strengthen the seafront offer, Seaburn and Roker are now vibrant leisure destinations set in £15m of award-winning and well-connected public realm that supports the city’s low carbon, and social and economic growth ambitions and have the ability to attract major national and international events.

## Question 7

### Public Question for Council – Wednesday 24 January 2024

#### Gentoo Waiting List

Raymond Lathan, a resident of Sunderland, has submitted the following question.

“Why does SCC not hold information about the number of people on Gentoo’s Housing Waiting List, or how many immigrants have been found housing by the Council and Gentoo since Sunderland became a Sanctuary City? It is surely in the public interest and to enable planning for future housing requirements to have such information available?”

Assistant Director of Law and Governance

#### Response

The Council does not hold live information from Gentoo’s waiting list. Nor does it hold live information regards other Registered Providers (RPs) waiting lists. We hold information on our Housing Register, which provides more comprehensive data as it cuts across all housing providers.

We do use RPs waiting list data (including Gentoo) when collating data to inform our Housing Needs Assessment, which we conduct every 5 five years.

The term Immigrant covers a very broad spectrum and includes everybody who has moved to the City. The introduction of the City of Sanctuary did not affect or influence the allocations policies of the Council or RPs, therefore the collation of this data is of no relevance.

Sanctuary City, as referred to in the question, is a movement in the USA and is not the same as City of Sanctuary UK.

I thank Members of the Chamber for your support since Sunderland Council joined the City of Sanctuary UK network. It offers a positive vision across cultures. It supports people seeking sanctuary in our communities by giving access to resources and expert support.

Going forward, City of Sanctuary UK faces challenges in terms of additional asylum and migrant needs. It offers welfare advice to those fleeing traumatic events, violence and domestic abuse.

It is a fantastic cause and enables community cohesion by encouraging inclusivity, solidarity and compassion for people who are forcibly displaced, to support them setting up home in the UK. In Sunderland we will do all we can to support that.



## Questions 8,10,11,12



### Public Questions for Council – Wednesday 24 January 2024

#### SCAS

Please find below questions from residents of Sunderland together with suggested response.

Question from Kim Inglis:

As an employee of SCAS I regularly work 50-hour weeks to achieve a living wage for the work I do, do all Councillors appreciate I have less time with my children and parents as a consequence, because I'm not paid appropriately, and what do you suggest I do to get a fair wage?

Question from Krystal Small:

As a result of being paid less than my male counterpart in Sunderland Council, for the equal work we do, I've not been able to take my 6 year old on holiday for 3 years. How do you suggest I explain that to my Billy, and why should I wait another year to get an answer from the Council?

Question from Mark Wilson (on behalf of organisation GMB):

What is Sunderland Council's position regarding a group of predominantly female workers still being paid less than their male comparators every day?

Question from Stephen Thompkins:

Is the Council's position that SCAS are still a separate organisation, or do you now concede that they are part of and managed by Sunderland City Council?

#### Response

Councillors will be aware that the members of the GMB Union, who are employees of Sunderland Care and Support, submitted an internal grievance in September against Sunderland Care and Support and Sunderland City Council. The grievance is in relation to the pay and benefits package for their role within Sunderland Care and Support.

All parties, including GMB, have agreed an ongoing process to take the issue forward. Both Sunderland City Council and Sunderland Care and Support are committed to this process and are working together to conclude this as efficiently and as quickly as possible whilst recognising the complexity of the matter. On that basis it would not be appropriate to comment further at this stage.

I do however have to state that I am a Member of the GMB. This Council's record on looking after its staff is second to none and we pay staff well. I want this resolved promptly and properly and if we have got anything wrong it will be rectified.

## Question 9

**Public Question for Council – Wednesday 24 January 2024**

### **Seaburn Fountain Roundabout**

Miquel Smith, a resident of Sunderland, has submitted the following question.

“When does the council plan to repair the fountain roundabout in Seaburn, which was damaged in a crash in January last year?”

Assistant Director of Law and Governance

### **Response**

The council have had to delay the repairs to the brickwork on the roundabout due to potential traffic management conflicts with the nearby cycleway improvements and the major events that took place along the seafront during the summer period. Now that Phase 1 of the cycleway works have been completed, the repair works to the roundabout will be programmed in, later in the Spring when the weather conditions have improved.

## Question 13

Public Question for Council – Wednesday 24 January 2024

### Safe Spaces

Susan Graves, a resident of Sunderland, has submitted the following question.

“Will Sunderland council please confirm that they will keep all safe spaces for female staff members and visitors. Giving that of other councils abolishing these spaces?”

Assistant Director of Law and Governance

### Response

Northumbria Police and Sunderland City Council rolled out an initiative in 2023 to work collectively across the entire City to reduce violence against women and girls (VAWG) and raise awareness about unacceptable behaviour towards women and girls.

As part of the initiative Northumbria Police launched Operation Salus, a mix of uniform and plain-clothed officers deployed in the nighttime economy to keep woman and girls safe. There is also a focus on capturing CCTV evidence to ensure anyone who commits crimes like spiking drinks or operating fake taxis is put before the courts.

In addition, Sunderland City Council deploy Neighbourhood Wardens to carry out foot patrols throughout our city across parks, play areas, cemeteries and open spaces.

Our approach is to:

- Increase/ extend preventative intervention responses to support women and girls at risk of VAWG in public places;
- Increase community-based support increasing women’s feelings of safety;
- Improve safety of city/ town access points/ passages that make women’s journeys safer and feel safer;
- Reassure and safeguard women;
- Ensure women can access resources and support;
- Enhance professional knowledge of VAWG, gender inequality and women’s safety needs regarding sexual violence and what steps to take as Active Bystanders.

The initiatives currently being delivered by Sunderland City Council and Northumbria Police will allow for early intervention, de-escalation and disruption of incidents where women or girls are in fear, aiming to increase feelings of public safety.

## Question 14



**Public Question for Council – Wednesday 24 January 2024**

### **Students**

William Armstrong, a resident of Sunderland, has submitted the following question.

“Hello , can you please tell me why Sunderland has recently had an influx of Africans ? I contacted Julie Elliot and her secretary said that the people in question are Nigerians and that 'Whitehall' dictate where these people are situated , so as Sunderland council , can you please state if the people in question are students or asylum seekers ? Thank you”

Assistant Director of Law and Governance

### **Response**

There are many people that come to our city for many reasons from other countries. Some come to study at the university, some come to provide care services within hospitals and wider care settings, some are living here through a range of immigration programmes.

As a City of Sanctuary, we welcome and embrace the opportunities and benefits of having such a diverse range of people coming to our city.

The introduction of the City of Sanctuary did not affect or influence the allocations policies of the Council or RPs, therefore the collation of this data is of no relevance.