

STOCKPORT LOCAL ACCESS FORUM (OUTSIDE BODY)

Meeting: 6 July 2020

At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

Dave Butler, Edgar Ernstbrunner, David Gosling, Debbi Hall, Jan Kitching and Liz Morgan.

Also in attendance

Nicholas Robinson - Senior Public Rights of Way Officer
Sue Stevenson - Head of Highways and Transportation
Damian Eaton - Secretary

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

RESOLVED – That Edgar Ernstbrunner be elected Chair of the Stockport Local Access Forum for the 2020/2021 Municipal Year.

Edgar Ernstbrunner in the chair

2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED – That Debbi Hall be appointed Vice-Chair of the Stockport Local Access Forum for the 2020/2021 Municipal Year.

3. MINUTES

The Notes (copies of which had been circulated) of the inquorate meeting held on 13 November 2019 were noted, and the Minutes of the meeting held on 29 July 2019 were approved as a correct record.

4. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members of the Forum were invited to declare any interests which they had in any of the items on the agenda for the meeting.

No declarations were made.

6. MATTERS ARISING

Apologies for Absence (Minute 4 of 29 July 2019 refers)

It was queried whether any further progress had been made towards the appointment of additional members of the Forum in the light of the fact that its membership had now fallen

to the statutory minimum of ten, and enquired what work had been undertaken to recruit additional members.

The Secretary stated that an advertisement had been placed on the Council's website but that had not resulted in the receipt of any formal applications for membership. It was suggested that consideration should be given to further promotion of the vacancies through social media avenues.

It was also confirmed by a Forum Member that an application from an interested party would be shortly forthcoming.

7. DEFINITIVE MAP MODIFICATION ORDERS

A report of the Deputy Chief Executive was submitted (copies of which had been circulated) providing an update on the activities of Legal Services towards implementing Definitive Map Modification Orders.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- The list of outstanding 'Definitive Map Modification Orders' (DMMOs) actually consisted of a mixture of DMMOs made under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and diversion or extinguishment orders made under the Highways Act 1980. It was again reiterated that future such reports should separate out these different categories of order.
- It was commented that the report provided insufficient information to allow members to readily understand the routes to which they related. It was suggested that items within the report could be supplemented by mapping to assist with this.
- Concern was expressed that orders that had been approved by the relevant area committee some years ago had now been highlighted within the report as requiring further investigation.
- It was stated the Council's Legal Services department now had additional capacity to progress a number of the outstanding orders. However, because some time has passed, in a number of cases, since the original decision of the area committees, work needed to take place to advise landowners of the intention to now implement those orders.

RECOMMENDED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the Deputy Chief Executive be requested to revise the format of the report to separate out the various types of order made to make the report more readily understandable by members of the Forum.

8. STATUTORY REGISTERS

A report of the Interim Transport Strategy Manager was submitted (copies of which had been circulated) detailing the Council's requirement to publish statutory registers pertaining to Public Rights of Way and the process for making that information available to the public.

The report further identified work underway to make improvements to the process by which information contained on the registers was updated to ensure that these reflected the most up-to-date information and reducing the need to make time-intensive manual updates to the information maintained online.

It was commented that the Definitive Map Modification Order (Section 53) Register lacked the necessary detail for effective assessment. It was noted that there were a number of other local authorities within the locality whose registers could be considered 'best practice' in this area and that Stockport should aim to replicate some of the features of these registers.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

9. STOCKPORT BRIDLEWAYS STRATEGY

Liz Morgan submitted the draft Stockport Bridleways Strategy (copies of which had been circulated) which had been developed by the Stockport Bridleways Association following a request from the Forum. It was stated that the aim of the strategy was to supplement the Council's walking and cycling strategies that aimed to enhance the development of multi-user routes for walkers and cyclists that would additionally present an opportunity to incorporate greater access to off road routes for horse riders, by considering upgrade of current footpaths to bridleway status.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- The Strategy was largely confirmed to existing routes contained within the definitive map and did not include those short 'linking routes' between estates that would provide safer routes for cyclists and horse riders away from busy principal roads. It was clarified that such routes would need to be subject to a claim in order to be ultimately incorporated within the wider strategy.
- It was commented that the process for the conversion of a footpath to a bridleway was lengthy and in many cases involved significant and potentially expensive works. It was noted that the appendix to the strategy contained an extensive schedule of proposed conversions and it was suggested that it was unlikely that the majority of those routes identified could be upgraded. It was proposed that consideration should be given to ordering the list in order of priority so that the Council might be able to target its resources accordingly.
- It was important to involve as many stakeholders as possible in a consultation on the draft strategy.
- It was suggested that members of the Forum might give consideration to providing their top 6 routes for prioritisation within the strategy to the Stockport Bridleways Association.
- The Council was working to encourage landowners to introduce alternatives to stiles to make routes more accessible generally.

RESOLVED – That the Stockport Bridleways Association be thanked for their work in developing the Strategy.

10. COVID-19 AND PROWS

The Chair reported that this item had been placed on the agenda at the request of David Gosling.

Mr Gosling reported that when lockdown measures were initially introduced as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, a number of signs had been erected by landowners that aimed to deter walkers from accessing public rights of way. It was stated that a number of these had been reported to the Council, and subsequently the Council erected its own signage developed in line with recommendations from the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs which did not seek to deter walkers, but to suggest that there may be alternatives to avoid places of habitation.

Clarification was sought on how this issue had been handled generally, whether there were any outstanding issues and what the timescale was for the removal of such signage.

The following comments were then made:-

- The Council had sought to address issues of unauthorised signage where this had been reported.
- The government's advice in relation to social distancing currently remained in place, and as such the Council's own signage and advice remained the same appropriate.
- The Council was willing to enter into discussions with landowners in relation to potential diversions where this would facilitate the creation of a more appropriate walking route.
- Members of the Forum thanked officers for their responsiveness to those reports of obstructed rights of way.

RESOLVED – That the position be noted.

11. RIGHTS OF WAY BUDGET 2020/21

The Chair reported that this item had been placed on the agenda at the request of David Gosling.

Mr Gosling requested clarity on the budget for public rights of way for the 2020/21 financial year.

In response it was stated that capital and revenue budgets had been set in February 2020 and was in the region of £90,000 revenue funding for responsive maintenance and £100,000 capital funding for fixed schemes. This was supplemented by additional funding secured from development schemes and grant funding secured from external bodies and agencies.

It was requested that details of those specific schemes included within the capital programme be circulated to members of the Forum.

RESOLVED – (1) That the position be noted.

(2) That the Secretary be requested to circulate a copy of the 2020/21 Transportation Capital Programme to members of the Forum.

12. CONSULTATION ON RIGHTS OF WAY AFFECTED BY NEW DEVELOPMENTS

The Chair reported that this item had been placed on the agenda at the request of David Gosling.

Mr Gosling reported on the difficulties that he had encountered in establishing the changes to rights of way routes, specifically as a result of the A6 to Manchester Airport Relief Road Scheme, but also more generally as it related to other developments across the borough.

It was suggested that key stakeholders and organisations such as the Peak and Northern Footpaths Society and the Stockport Bridleways Association should be consulted on development applications where they proposed to make changes to existing rights of way as part of the planning process.

RESOLVED – That the position be noted.

13. DATES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

The Forum was requested to consider the dates for future meetings of the Forum.

Members expressed their thanks to officers for facilitating the meeting of the Forum by electronic means that enabled the Forum to continue its work and open and transparent way.

RESOLVED – (1) That it be noted that the next meeting of the Forum was scheduled to be held on Thursday, 19 November 2020.

(2) That a further meeting of the Forum be held on Monday, 15 March 2021.

The meeting closed at 7.26 pm