

SCRUTINY REVIEW PANEL - THE COUNCIL'S POLICY FOR ACTIVE STREETS, PLAY STREETS AND SCHOOL STREETS

Meeting: 3 February 2021
At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

Councillors Charles Gibson, John McGahan, Adrian Nottingham, Mark Roberts and Kerry Waters.

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

RESOLVED – That Councillor Adrian Nottingham be elected Chair of the Panel for the duration of the Review.

Councillor Adrian Nottingham in the Chair

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors and officers were invited to declare any interests which they had in any of the items on the agenda for the meeting.

No declarations were made.

3. SCRUTINY REVIEW PANEL PROCEDURE RULES

A representative of the Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer (Legal & Democratic Governance) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) requesting the Panel to formally adopt the Scrutiny Review Panel Procedure Rules for this review.

RESOLVED – That the Scrutiny Review Procedure Rules be adopted for this review.

4. STOCKPORT COUNCIL TEMPORARY STREET CLOSURE SCRUTINY REVIEW SCOPING REPORT

Sue Stevenson (Head of Highways and Transportation, Stockport Council) attended the meeting and submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) detailing the type of temporary street closures that the Council did or could provide to the public. The report identified the benefits and potential problems associated with each type of closure and the different opportunities and the issues related to them.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- It was commented that anecdotally the requirement for organisers to have public liability insurance had been seen as a barrier to a wider take-up of these type of temporary street closures.
- Clarity was requested on why public liability insurance was a requirement for active street/ play street/ school street schemes, but not for closures associated with, for example, street parties. In response, it was stated that this was due to the level of risk

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associated with ongoing or recurring street closures which was more limited for one-off events such as street parties.

- The requirement for public liability insurance had been imposed to protect those residents operating the scheme as well as the Council's position.
- It was suggested that the costs associated with obtaining public liability insurance was not prohibitive and should not, in of itself, dissuade residents from operating a scheme.
- It would be useful to understand how such schemes operated elsewhere in the country and what had worked well.
- It was noted that local authorities in London had the power to enforce Moving Traffic Contraventions which mean they had additional powers to enforce the imposition of street closures associated with active street/ play street/ school street schemes.
- A discussion took place in relation to the difference between an active street and an active neighbourhood and it was clarified that active neighbourhoods were broader schemes that would include a more comprehensive and wider treatment for the locality aimed at prioritising walking and cycling within that defined community.
- Two active communities schemes were currently being developed in the Heatons and Romiley areas of the borough as part of a funding package obtained through the Mayor's Challenge Fund. A further smaller-scale trial was taking place in the Cheadle Heath area by TfGM. A further School Street pilot was being run in the Cheadle area as part of the Cheadle Town Fund scheme.
- A number of Walk Ride groups in the Borough were keen to develop projects elsewhere in the borough.
- It was important for the Panel to gain an understanding of why the uptake of active street/ play street/ school street schemes was lower in Stockport than in other comparable authorities.
- It was acknowledged that Stockport was considered progressive when it first launched its policy for these schemes, but it was now opportune to review whether the existing policy remained appropriate as other authorities had subsequently developed their own schemes and practices and understanding had evolved.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

5. RATIONALE AND SCOPE FOR THE REVIEW

The Panel was invited to reflect in the information they had considered earlier in the meeting and to subsequently agree the focus for the review and determine the areas which they wished to explore and scrutinise further as part of the conduct of this review.

Clarity was requested on when the work of the Panel needed to be concluded. It was confirmed that ideally the Panel should aim to report by the conclusion of the Municipal Year.

RESOLVED – (1) That the scope of the review be defined as:-

- Understanding whether Stockport had a lower uptake of school street/ play street and active street schemes when compared with similar local authorities.
- Understanding what the barriers were to a wider adoption of such schemes across the borough including the impact of the requirement for groups to have public liability insurance in place.

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- Considering the evidence presented to the Panel to determine whether it would be appropriate to make recommendations in relation to the current policy and how it operated in Stockport.

(2) That the Head of Highways and Transportation, Stockport Council and Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer (Legal & Democratic Governance) be requested to convene further meetings of the Panel on the following bases:-

Meeting One - Late February/ Early March – ‘What’s the Problem?’

- Invite a number of interested parties to attend the meeting to provide the Panel with first-hand evidence on how the current Active/ Play/ School Streets policies in the borough operated.

Meeting Two – Late March – ‘What’s the Solution?’

- Invite further participation from organisations and other local authorities to develop suggestions for new or alternative ways of operating such schemes.
- Receive reports providing:-
 - Comparative data on how Stockport compares with other local authorities and examples of how they ‘doing things differently’.
 - An update from legal services on their position with Public Liability Insurance.

6. DATES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED – That the Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer (Legal & Democratic Governance), in consultation with the Chair, be requested to determine the date for the next meeting of the Panel.

The meeting closed at 6.50 pm