

COMMUNITIES & HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting: 25 January 2021

At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

Councillor Mark Roberts (Chair) in the chair; Councillor John McGahan (Vice-Chair); Councillors Dickie Davies, Charles Gibson, Janet Mobbs, Tom Morrison, Adrian Nottingham, Andy Sorton and Kerry Waters.

1. MINUTES

The Minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meeting held on 7 December 2020 were approved as a correct record and signed by 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.

The following interest was declared:-

Personal Interest

Councillor

Interest

Andy Sorton

Agenda Item 5 – ‘One Stockport Borough Plan’ as his partner was employed in the Library Service that was mentioned in a wider context within the report.

3. CALL-IN

There were no call-in items to consider.

4. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PUBLIC INTEREST TEST

RESOLVED - That in order to prevent the disclosure of information which was not for publication, the disclosure of which would not be in the public interest, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of any of the exempt information in Agenda Item 10 – ‘St Thomas’s Gardens’ and Agenda Item 11 – ‘Active Communities: Progressing new delivery arrangements’.

5. ONE STOCKPORT BOROUGH PLAN

A representative of the Corporate Director (Corporate and Support Services) and Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) detailing how partners across Stockport had approached the development of a shared borough plan, including an overview of the insight which had informed the development of the priorities, and introducing a draft borough plan for scrutiny comment and consideration.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- The clear identification in the report of those priorities in the Plan that fell within the remit of the Scrutiny Committee was welcomed.
- It was suggested that the alliterative effect of using 'One Hope' rather than 'One Future' in conjunction with 'One Heart' and 'One Home' might set better within the communications for the Plans.
- While social value is intrinsic to and threaded throughout the document, however it is only explicitly mentioned once.
- It was noted that members would have further opportunity to comment on the Borough Plan at meetings of the area committees taking place in the coming weeks.
- The summary of responses from area committees within the report from when matter was last remitted those committees was noted and welcomed.
- In response to the statement in the report that Stockport was the best connected town in the north of England, it was commented that while this was true of the town centre, many other areas of the borough suffered from very poor connectivity, particularly with regard to connections between the different districts of the borough.
- Concern was expressed that throughout the consultation it was clear that respondents expressed an affinity with and pride of their local community, however the Plan itself seemed to be town-centre focussed. It was suggested there needed to be a greater focus on the borough's district centres.
- It was important to create employment opportunities and utilising employment land appropriately in Stockport so that young people had access to good employment within the borough.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

6. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) BUDGET AND RENT LEVELS FOR 2021/22

The Corporate Director (Place) & Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing an illustrative Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget for 2021/22 including the level of rent and service charges. The illustrative budget was based on a number of key assumptions set out in the report regarding income from rent and service charges; expenditure commitments contained within the HRA 30-year Business Plan and Asset Management Strategy and indicative spending requirements to support inflationary pressures and identified investment priorities.

The Cabinet Member for Sustainable Stockport (Councillor Sheila Bailey) attended the meeting to respond to councillors' questions.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- It was noted that rent levels in Stockport were notably lower than other boroughs in Greater Manchester and in future years work needed to take place to bring Stockport more in line with the average for the conurbation. In response it was stated that the current administration was opposed to any significant increase in rent levels, and it was further stated that rent increases were currently calculated by way of reference to a national formula that was outside the control of the Council.

- It was queried why there remained some properties that were subject to communal energy charges and whether this disincentivised energy efficiency.
- It was noted that the response to the consultation on the proposed rent levels was quite low and whether more could be done to engage with tenants. However, it was stated that a lot of work goes into ensuring that information is disseminated to residents, and that the response rate had not varied significantly from that in previous years.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

7. HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY

The Corporate Director (Place) & Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) detailing a draft housing allocation policy that explained how the Council intends to allocate its housing stock, including who qualifies to apply, how households will be prioritised and the processes to be used.

To facilitate the priorities within the Housing Strategy 2021-2024 and Rough Sleeping and Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2021-2024, the Council's Allocation Policy has been reviewed. The policy details how the Council's commitment to meeting housing needs may be achieved by making best use of existing stock through supporting existing tenants to move through mutual exchanges, and continuing to utilise options such as shared tenancies for young people.

The Cabinet Member for Sustainable Stockport (Councillor Sheila Bailey) attended the meeting to respond to councillors' questions.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

8. ROUGH SLEEPING AND HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION STRATEGY 2021-2024

The Corporate Director (Place) & Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) detailing the Council's requirement to formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on the results of a review of homelessness in the district. Stockport's current Homelessness Prevention Strategy was published in 2016 and was due to come to an end in March 2021. The proposed new strategy presented as part of the report would replace the existing strategy and further outlined the measures the local authority and its partners would take until 2024.

The Cabinet Member for Sustainable Stockport (Councillor Sheila Bailey) attended the meeting to respond to councillors' questions.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- It was queried why there was a disparity in the data between those who had presented as homeless and the figures detailing the numbers who were subsequently accepted as homeless. It was clarified that people were encouraged to contact Stockport Homes as soon as practicable if they were at risk of being made homeless which allowed for appropriate advice and signposting to prevent them from ultimately being made homeless.

- Rough sleepers and those being accommodated within hostels were being prioritised appropriately for Covid-19 vaccinations.
- In response to query about levels of homelessness in the LGBT community and the training provided to staff to handle such cases appropriately, it was stated that Stockport Homes had an LGBT staff group, had provided awareness training to its staff around LGBT issues, and had supplied rainbow lanyards to its staff to make it clear that staff were approachable.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

9. CLEAN AIR AND MINIMUM LICENSING STANDARDS UPDATE

The Corporate Director (Place) & Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing an update on the recent consultation on the proposed measures and the next phase of work including understanding the implications of Covid-19.

The Cabinet Member for Sustainable Stockport (Councillor Sheila Bailey) attended the meeting to respond to councillors' questions.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- It was commented that the government had agreed to extend the Greater Manchester Clean Air Zone charges to sections of the A628/A57 within Tameside, and it was queried whether there had been any indication that the government may do the same with the motorway network and the A555 that passed through Stockport. In response, it was stated that there was currently no further update on the A555 and that representations continued to be made to the government in relation to those roads within the purview of Highways England.
- The Council was being held to a timetable for the introduction of the Clean Air Zone that did not allow for taking into account the impact that the coronavirus pandemic had made on air quality through a consequent reduction in emissions.
- Clarity was requested on whether data obtained from ANPR cameras erected to police the Clean Air Zone would be shared with other bodies such as the police and the DVLA.
- It was confirmed that area committees would be consulted on the locations of ANPR devices associated with the operation of the Clean Air Zone.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

10. AGENDA PLANNING

A representative of the Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer (Legal & Democratic Governance) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) setting out the planned agenda items for the Scrutiny Committee's next meeting and any relevant Forward Plan items.

The Chair commented that the Committee's scrutiny review with regard to the Council's policy for active streets, school streets and play streets was shortly due to get underway.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- It was noted that the Committee had previously requested a report on the Council's gully maintenance schedule and that this would be included as part of a wider report on the Flood Action Plan that was due to be considered at the next ordinary meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED –That the report be noted.

Items 'Not for Publication'

11. ST THOMAS' GARDENS

The Corporate Director (Place) & Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing an update on the progress to date in bringing forward the redevelopment of St Thomas' Gardens, in particular the Academy of Living Well, and seeking approval for the Council to commit to the next stage of design and construction.

The Cabinet Member for Sustainable Stockport (Councillor Sheila Bailey) attended the meeting to respond to councillors' questions.

(NOTE: This item contained a 'not for publication' appendix that was circulated to members of the Scrutiny Committee only).

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

12. ACTIVE COMMUNITIES: PROGRESSING NEW DELIVERY ARRANGEMENTS

The Corporate Director (Place) & Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) detailing an outline business case for the establishment of a Community Interest Company (CIC) to deliver active communities programmes and operate Council-owned leisure centres.

The Cabinet Member for Sustainable Stockport (Councillor Sheila Bailey) attended the meeting to respond to councillors' questions.

(NOTE: This item consisted of a 'not for publication' report that was circulated to members of the Scrutiny Committee only).

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.35 pm