

STOCKPORT LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Meeting: 19 July 2021

At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

Dave Butler, Kathy England, Phil Featherstone, David Gosling and Debbi Hall.

Also in attendance

Amy Beasley	- Service Manager, Place Planning
Tim Boylan	- Senior Transportation Officer
Mark Glynn	- Director of Place Management
Jon Gudgeon	- Team Leader, Highways and Transportation
Damian Eaton	- Secretary

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Kathy England and David Gosling were nominated for election to the office of chair of the Stockport Local Access Forum for the period until the next Annual Council Meeting.

For Kathy England – 2

For David Gosling – 3

RESOLVED – That David Gosling be elected Chair of the Stockport Local Access Forum for the period until the next Annual Council Meeting.

David Gosling in the Chair

2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

Kathy England and Debbi Hall were nominated for appointment to the office of vice-chair of the Stockport Local Access Forum for the period until the next Annual Council Meeting.

For Kathy England – 3

For Debbi Hall – 1

RESOLVED – That Kathy England be appointed Vice-Chair of the Stockport Local Access Forum for the period until the next Annual Council Meeting.

3. MINUTES

The Minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meeting held on 15 March 2021 were approved as a correct record.

4. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Edgar Ernstbrunner, Liz Morgan and Chris Walsh.

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

There were no matters arising not otherwise listed on the agenda for consideration.

7. STOCKPORT LOCAL PLAN UPDATE

Amy Beasley (Service Manager, Place Planning) attended the meeting and made a presentation in relation to progress towards the development of the 'One Stockport Local Plan'.

It was reported that the Council was required to have a Local Plan in place that would act as a formal planning document and would be used to determine whether planning applications for new developments in the borough would be considered appropriate. It was confirmed that it was intended that the Local Plan would be in force until 2038 and would ensure that the right homes, employment land and infrastructure to support that was in place.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- It was confirmed that while the plan was predominantly a land use plan, it also included infrastructure, and specifically transport infrastructure necessary to support future development.
- It was noted that the current Unitary Development Plan was out of date and specific comments were made in relation to provision for cycling. In response it was stated that until a new plan was adopted the Council was required to use the existing plan, however once the proposed plan had gone out to consultation then it could have further weight attached to it in advance of its final adoption which was anticipated in 2023.
- Members were encouraged to contribute to the public consultation on the proposed plan when it was available.

RESOLVED – (1) That Amy Beasley be thanked for her attendance and presentation.

(2) That the Secretary be requested to make arrangements for copies of the presentation to be circulated to members of the Forum.

8. PROPOSED ROMILEY TO STOCKPORT WALKING AND CYCLING ROUTE

Tim Boylan (Senior Transportation Officer) and Jon Gudgeon (Team Leader, Highways and Transportation) attended the meeting and submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing an opportunity for members of the Forum to comment on the consultation on a new link between Romiley and Stockport that was being developed as part of Greater Manchester's cycling and walking network.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- It was confirmed that the proposals included the development of a new pedestrian and cyclist bridge over the River Goyt to Carrington Road/ Newbridge Lane/ New Zealand Road.
- Concern was expressed in relation to the suitability of the surfacing on the existing track from Bredbury Hall to Pear Mill which consisted of loose stone which was difficult for cyclists to negotiate. It was suggested that flexi-pave would have produced a surface that all users could properly use.
- It was commented that the proposed route brought users out onto an existing Town Centre Access Plan Scheme at Newbridge Lane and Millgate, the routing of which was less than ideal as the track switched from one side of the road to the other and ended at a shared path with a high density of pedestrians.
- Concern was expressed that significant elements of the route did not benefit from passive surveillance at night which meant some users may be disinclined to use it. In response it was stated that ecological surveys would be undertaken and consideration was being given to the provision of lighting.
- It was noted that the proposals also included some provision for horse-rider, however no facilities were proposed for such users to cross roads contained within the route. It was further commented that Pegasus crossings were overly engineered, and the specification and design of such crossings meant that the number of locations where they were deemed feasible were extremely limited. It was suggested that consideration should be given to providing a crossing button on existing infrastructure at a higher level to allow horse-riders to use existing facilities. In response, it was stated that the council was required to ensure that facilities it provided adhered to design standards.
- In response to a comment in relation to the condition of the route from Goyt Hall Farm to Bredbury Hall, it was stated that the council was aware of this and proposals had been put forward to replace this surface with vehicle grade flexi-pave. It was suggested as an alternative that a strip of flexi-pave would be sufficient to allow use by cyclists whilst not encouraging the speed of vehicles which was known to be an issue at this location.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

9. UPDATE ON PROGRESS ON STATUTORY REGISTERS FOR RIGHTS OF WAY

The Director of Place Management submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing an update on the proposed way forward to improve the Statutory Registers on the Council website.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- The longstanding concerns of members of the Forum were acknowledged and it was stated that progress continued to be made behind the scenes.
- It was stated that the most recent applications listed on the Council's Section 53 register did not provide sufficient information to allow anyone to register an objection to the application. Concern was further expressed in relation to the quality of the associated mapping which made them difficult to interpret.

- Comments were made in relation the available staffing resource to satisfactorily tackle the backlog of work in the rights of way service.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

10. A555 PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY UPDATE REPORT

The Director of Place Management submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing an update on progress to deliver the changes to public rights of way as a result of the construction of the A555.

It was reported that there had been a number of changes to rights of way around the route of the A555 relief road which also included some new footpaths and diversions of existing routes. It was stated that these changes had not yet been published on the online rights of way map, but it had been established that it was possible to show rights of way on the map before that had been incorporated into a consolidated Definitive Map and as a consequence it was hoped that these would be added to the map soon.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the progress towards providing accurate rights of way information on the online mapping resource be welcomed.

11. NOTIFICATION TO PNFS, RAMBLERS AND BHS OF ANY RIGHTS OF WAY AFFECTED BY CURRENT PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The Chair reported that this item had been placed on the agenda at his request.

The Chair explained that it would be helpful for interested stakeholders such as the Peak and Northern Footpaths Society, the Ramblers and the British Horse Society to be automatically notified when a development application would have a consequential impact on rights of way. The Chair reported that this practice was in place at a number of other local authorities.

In response, it was stated that the automation of this process would be a difficult technical exercise without creating a significant additional burden. It was stated that all development applications were loaded onto the online planning portal and interested groups were encouraged to check this on a regular basis.

A number of members responded that those groups represented on the forum did not themselves necessarily have the resource to check each submitted application to determine its impact on rights of way, particularly where their geographic remit extended beyond the borough boundaries and that it was important that instead these were highlighted. It was further commented that the rights of way team were notified of circumstances where there was an impact and as such there must already be a notification process in place that could be adapted to provide for wider dissemination.

RESOLVED – That the position be noted.

12. CRITERIA FOR PRIORITISING FOOTPATH MAINTENANCE

The Chair reported that this item had been placed on the agenda at his request.

The Chair stated that a number of organisation such as the Peak and Northern Footpaths Society and the Ramblers undertook regular path surveys which identified issues and suggestions which were forwarded onto the local authority. However, there was confusion as to why some of these were dealt with or remedied and others were not and the inconsistency in receiving responses in relation to these submissions. It was queried whether there was a criteria in place which would explain this disparity in outcome and response.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- It was suggested that details of the most recent submission be forwarded to the Director of Place Management so that a review could be undertaken to establish what had taken place.
- It was clarified that no criticism of officers was implied, however members would like to understand how such work was prioritised internally.
- In response to a question about the maintenance of the Trans Pennine Trail, it was stated that there was no input specification for the work undertaken by TLC who were asked simply to inspect periodically, and if required then clean it. As part of this, general maintenance work should be undertaken such as cutting back of bushes and ensuring that it was otherwise free of obstructions.
- Concern was expressed that the maintenance programme as described did not sound particularly systematic.
- A discussion took place in relation to the asset based management system described at previous meetings of the Forum and how quickly users would start to see a difference.

RESOLVED – That the Director of Place Management be requested to give consideration to the issues raised by the Forum.

13. ESTABLISHING A VOLUNTEER FOOTPATH CLEARANCE GROUP

The Chair reported that this item had been placed on the agenda at his request.

The Chair stated that the intention of this item was to commence a discussion on the in relation to whether the Council would support a volunteer scheme to assist with the clearance and basic maintenance of footpaths. It was noted that some work was already undertaken by volunteers on the Trans Pennine Trail and Cheshire East Council had a scheme to provide support and funding for volunteer groups. It was further stated that it was understood that the Greenspace Team did provide support to volunteer groups with matters such as insurance for works in local parks and a similar such scheme for rights of way should be considered.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- It was commented that the volunteers on the Trans Pennine Trail operated under the auspices of the Greenspace Team, but there were frustrations that engaging in this

way came with a number of bureaucratic hurdles such as being required to undertake Stockport's task manager training and first aid training even if it could be demonstrated this had already been undertaken elsewhere.

- There needed to be a much better level of support for volunteer groups.
- It was suggested that where the Council provided equipment this introduced a degree of liability which understandably needed to be mitigated against and an alternative process would be for the groups make applications for funding to procure the equipment directly.

RESOLVED – That the position be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.21 pm