

STOCKPORT LOCAL ACCESS FORUM (OUTSIDE BODY)

Meeting: 14 March 2022

At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

David Gosling (Chair) in the chair; Kathy England (Vice-Chair); Dave Butler, Edgar Ernstbrunner, Phil Featherstone, Debbi Hall, Liz Morgan, Zoe Smith and Chris Walsh.

Also in attendance

Emily Brough - Strategy Growth and Improvement Manager
Damian Eaton - Secretary

1 MINUTES

The Minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meeting held on 16 November 2021 were approved as a correct record.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

The Secretary reported that following the last meeting of the Forum he had contacted those members who hadn't recently attended a meeting of the Forum to understand whether there were any barriers that were preventing them from accessing and participating in the meetings. It was stated that following this contact the Secretary had received notice that Rachel Sewart had resigned her membership of the Forum.

Members of the Forum extended their thanks and gratitude to Rachel Sewart for her membership and contributions to the work of the Forum.

3 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.

4 MATTERS ARISING

- (i) Establishing a Volunteer Footpath Clearance Group (Minute 13 of 19 July 2021 refers)

The Chair reported that he had proposed that the Council and local volunteers could work in collaboration with The Conservation Volunteers which was a charity established to undertake environmental work including work on footpaths. It was suggested that the Council should approach this organisation as they had the expertise, training and insurance cover to allow this to readily take place.

The Chair reported that he had been involved in early discussions between the Council's Rights of Way Officer and representatives of the organisation in relation to a potential project at Mirlees Fields utilising some funding provided by the Stepping Hill Area Committee.

(ii) A555 Public Rights of Way Update Report (Minute 10 of 19 July 2021 refers)

It was stated that the Rights of Way Team were continuing to work with legal services to ensure that the online mapping system was updated and it was anticipated that those routes that were not subject to further changes would be published soon. It was stated that as soon as legal services had given approval to the publication of the updated routes, the Rights of Way Team would action that.

(iii) Notification to PNFS, Ramblers and BHS of any rights of way affected by current planning applications (Minute 11 of 19 July 2021 refers)

It was reported that notifications in relation to development applications that affected rights of way had started to be issues to key stakeholders. The Chair stated that with regard to the notification that he had received, he had subsequently lodged an objection as the application appeared to impact the route but it was not sufficiently clear on the appended plans. The Chair stated that this was a clear demonstration of the benefit of receiving notification of such proposals.

5 ACCESS CONTROL MEASURES STATEMENT

A representative of the Director of Place Management submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) detailing new guidance for local authorities to follow on designing high quality, safe cycle infrastructure and outlining a review being undertaken by the Council to ensure that its procedures supported this guidance alongside existing legislation including the Equality Act 2010.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- It was commented that the report did not clearly identify that consideration had been given to ensuring that access control measures would be suitable for all users including those on horses or using carriages, specifically with regard to the testing of these measures.
- It was stated that work needed to be done to encourage as wide a range of users as possible to be able to access off-road routes with particular regard to the safety of those users.
- It was requested that the Forum should be afforded the opportunity to comment on the final policy prior to its consideration by the Council's scrutiny committees and before the decision was taken.
- Concern was expressed that some of the proposals contained in the report were still discriminatory.
- Frustration was expressed in relation to the length of time it had taken to get the policy to this stage and that users were being prevented from gaining access to many routes across the borough.
- Insufficient profile or consideration was being given to horse riders.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

6 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL)

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

The Chair stated that he had been made aware that the Community Infrastructure Levy was a method by which local authorities could levy a charge on developers that could then be used for infrastructure improvements, including those to rights of way.

It was noted that the Council had previously published a decision notice from December 2014 that it would implement the Community Infrastructure Levy and clarification was requested on whether any further action had been taken to implement this. In response, it was stated that the planning department had responded to state that Council did not use the Community Infrastructure Levy mechanism but did obtain some funds for work in this area through section 106 contributions such as through the development at the former Woodford Aerodrome and the securing the dedication of routes such as at land off Wilmslow Road, Heald Green.

The following comments were then made/ issues raised:-

- There was a broader issue in relation to how the Council could use the measures available to it to secure funding for rights of way improvements.
- It was noted that £8m had been collected in Section 106 monies, and further information was requested on how this was allocated and spent. In response it was stated that the funding could not be spent until each development was completed which could introduce delays.
- Some significant improvements had been secured through Section 106 contributions.
- It was suggested that funding obtained through the Community Infrastructure Levy provided for more flexibility in its allocation to specific schemes.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the Corporate Director for Corporate and Support Services & Deputy Chief Executive be requested to give further consideration to the use of the Community Infrastructure Levy as means of securing improvement to public rights of way.

7 UPDATE ON PROGRESS ON STATUTORY REGISTERS FOR RIGHTS OF WAY

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

The Chair reported that there was a statutory requirement that each local authority maintains and keeps up to date its Section 53 register of definitive map medication orders and that Stockport was not currently fulfilling its duty in this regard. Moreover, it was stated that the current format of the register maintained on the website was not optimal for displaying and accessing the information that had been published.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- A response was awaited from the Council's IT team in relation to the options available for improvements to the current online register
- The Chair expressed ongoing concern in relation to consistent failure of the Council to keep the Section 53 register.
- It was stated that discussions had taken place within local stakeholder groups in relation to the potential for making a complaint through the Council's own internal complaints procedures and then onto the Local Government Ombudsman or through the Council's own internal complaints procedures.
- It was stated that representations could also be made through the relevant Cabinet Member on the Council.
- It was acknowledged that there was a lack of resources within the Council that had contributed to issues in this area.
- It was noted that there was a lack of progress in processing claims.
- It was suggested that the various groups represented on the Forum engage in discussions outside the meeting in relation to agreeing a way forward.

RESOLVED – That the position be noted.

8 REVIEW OF THE DEFINITIVE MAP AND STATEMENT FOR STOCKPORT

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

It was reported that the timescale for the review of the definitive map and statement for Stockport was likely to be measured in years. The Chair stated that it was understood that this was a long-term project, however it was suggested that the Forum would benefit from receiving regular progress reports.

It was suggested that the Forum would benefit from receiving an annual report covering the activities of the Rights of Way Team.

RESOLVED – That the Director of Place Management be requested to include an item on the agenda for the next meeting of the Forum providing an update on the activities of the Rights of Way service during 2021/22.

9 NORTH WEST REGIONAL LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

The Chair provided an update on the meeting of the North West Regional Local Access Forum that took place on 18 November 2021.

The Chair stated that the following topics were the subject of discussion at the meeting:-

- Fire safety index and wildfires
- England coastal path
- The impact of covid-19
- The impact of climate change
- Work of the Trails Trust.

The Chair then noted that many of the representatives in attendance at the North West Regional Local Access Forum had referenced that their respective fora were no longer

active and meeting and that it was commendable that Stockport continued to hold regular meetings with an active and engaged membership.

10 DATES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOVLED – That meetings of the Forum be held on the following dates, commencing at 6.00 pm:-

- Monday, 18 July 2022
- Tuesday, 15 November 2022
- Monday, 13 March 2023

The meeting closed at 7.08 pm