

STOCKPORT LOCAL ACCESS FORUM (OUTSIDE BODY)

Meeting: 15 November 2022

At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

David Gosling (Chair) in the chair; Kathy England (Vice-Chair); Dave Butler, Edgar Ernstbrunner, Debbi Hall, Liz Morgan, Councillor Mark Roberts and Chris Walsh.

Also in Attendance

Emily Brough - Strategy Growth and Improvement Manager
Jamie Cockerham - CSS Officer (Democratic & Electoral Services)
Sue Stevenson - Head of Highways & Transportation

1. MINUTES

The minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meeting held on 18 July 2022 were approved as a correct record.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Phil Featherstone.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members of the Forum were invited to declare any interest 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 requested further discussions with transport officers in order to ascertain how conservation volunteers could best be used in footpath clearance activities, in conjunction with the work of Council staff.

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

The Chair reported that he was unaware of any progress on this report. It was commented that officers were continuing to work through the list of public rights of way that needed to be added to the map.

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

Members reported that they were continuing to receive notification of rights of way being affected by current planning applications, although there was no method by which they could independently verify that they were receiving notification of all of them.

(iv) Review of the Definitive Map and Statement for Stockport (Minute 8 of 14 March 2022 refers)

Members commented that, in reviewing past changes to the Definitive Map and Statement, it had been found that many of the changes did not have any documentary evidence to support them, or did not match the modification orders that had brought about the changes. Members expressed concern that a lack of clarity in the Definitive Map and Statement could be a significant issue for the Council if any cases were disputed or subject to legal challenge. Members highlighted that the public availability of this information had been required since the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949. It was suggested that further work would now need to be done to formalise the current Definitive Map and Statement given the lack of documentary evidence for some aspects of it.

Officers agreed with the importance of this issue and commented that a report on this matter, with input from the Council's Legal Services department, would be essential. It was noted that officers had investigated this issue previously, and had discovered little information in the paper archives to remedy this issue.

5. UPDATE ON THE ACCESS CONTROL MEASURES POLICY STATEMENT

Sue Stevenson (Head of Highways & Transportation) attended the meeting to provide an update on the Access Control Measures Policy Statement.

It was confirmed that a report on this issue would be submitted to the next cycle of Scrutiny Committees in November. It was noted that this could then be brought back to the next meeting of the Forum, at which point it could be discussed as a final Policy Statement.

The following comments were then made/issues raised:-

- Members expressed frustration towards the timing of the report and the fact that it had not been published in time for discussion at the current meeting of the Forum.
- Members queried whether a working group would be established in the near future to move forward with the new policy statement at the earliest opportunity, and to implement changes such as the removal of discriminatory barriers from public access routes. In response, it was commented that the next steps on this matter in the short and long term would be outlined in the upcoming report, and that this would need to be realistic in terms of its financial and resource implications.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.

6. UPDATE FROM TRANSPORT STRATEGY TEAM

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

It was stated that this item had been placed on the agenda as a standing item in order to give officers an opportunity to present to the Forum what they have achieved over recent months. Emily Brough (Strategy Growth and Improvement Manager) attended the meeting to update Members on the work of the Transport Strategy Team and Public Rights of Way Officer.

The update outlined works that had been done by Officers to date in 2023, including the handling of 478 inspections, 11 land registry requests and 15 Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) involving public rights of way. Further work by officers were outlined such as arranging repairs on Blackberry Lane Bridge through the capital program, a creation order for a new footpath between Marlow Close and footpath 64 Cheadle & Gatley, and the submission of 5 reports to the latest committee cycle.

The following comments were then made/issues raised:-

- It was noted that Transport Strategy covered a large range of matters, not all of which were relevant to the Forum. Members welcomed the update, and commented that it was useful to be aware of the day-to-day work of officers.
- Members queried whether the new cycle path along Bridge Lane and Jacksons Lane was open. It was commented that the path was open, and had already been in use prior to completion. It was noted that some further issues on the route were due to be resolved.
- It was noted that further Quiet Lanes had been designated following the previous cycle of Area Committees in conjunction with the views of Ward Members. Members supported the designation of these lanes in order to support various forms of access.
- Members noted that works on Nelstrop Road North had now been completed and that the road had been reopened with full lighting, which had improved accessibility between the Heatons and Reddish.
- Members also noted the imminent reopening of the Thomson Street Bridge, which had been closed for a number of years, and highlighted the improved access that this would provide for Edgeley and to Stockport Railway Station.
- It was noted that the Brabyns Park iron bridge was scheduled to be closed for repairs in the near future, although it was commented that this fell under the remit of the Neighbourhoods Team.

RESOLVED – That the position be noted.

7. NAMED ROUTES IN STOCKPORT

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

It was stated that Members of the Forum had discussed named routes in Stockport in previous meetings and felt that it was worth having a formal item on this topic. Particular areas of interest to the Forum included whether named routes receive any priority in terms of maintenance or budgets, whether some named routes were given higher priority than

others, and if there is any ambition from the Council to create new named routes in Stockport as part of a drive to encourage walking and cycling.

The following comments were then made/issues raised:-

- It was commented that there was not a specific policy for Named Routes in Stockport. However, it was noted that the Forum had previously received the Inspections Policy, which does acknowledge that national and regional Named Routes could be expected to have high usage, and that this should help to inform the maintenance schedule for these routes.
- The priority in terms of maintenance or response times afforded to some Named Routes was due to higher usage, rather than solely due to them being Named Routes. Furthermore, it was noted that priority could vary across the length of the same Named Routes. For instance, some parts of the Fred Perry Way were busier than others were, and therefore may receive higher priority.
- Not all Named Routes are considered public rights of way across their entire lengths. For instance, they may be considered as Highways or Green Space in some parts, or as private land with a permissive right in some locations. Consequently, the Inspections Policy needed to afford an overarching approach that could accommodate this split responsibility.
- The public consultation for the 2018 Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Stockport had not identified the designation of new Named Routes as a priority issue within the borough. Consequently, there was no ongoing aspiration to increase the number of Named Routes in Stockport.
- It was commented that Named Routes were not always named by the Council, and were often created by volunteers and interest groups, which then has a cost and resource implication for the Council in terms of maintenance.
- Members noted the recent announcement of a new Greater Manchester Ringway Route, which was intended to pass through Stockport in some places.
- It was suggested that, by virtue of their status as being 'Named', users of the routes may expect that the responsibility for management of Named Routes is consistent across their full lengths.
- Members expressed concern towards the split responsibility for maintenance of Named Routes, as this complicated the reporting of issues by users of the routes. In response, it was commented that officers were hoping to achieve a more joined-up approach towards maintenance under the Estates Management Team.
- Members highlighted the benefits of Named Routes for promoting access in Stockport. However it was noted that some routes, such as the Cown Edge Way, were in poor condition in some areas. Therefore, it may be more beneficial for the Council only to publicise the Named Routes felt to be in good condition for access.
- Concern was expressed by Members that some routes, such as the Mid-Shires Way, were advertised as multi-user routes but could not be accessed by horse riders in some places.
- It was noted that some towns advertise their local Named Routes with slogans such as 'Walkers are Welcome'. It was suggested that Stockport could use a similar slogan to promote local access, but also include groups such as cyclists and horse riders.

RESOLVED – That the position be noted.

8. AGENDA PLANNING

Members and officers were invited to suggest agenda items for future meetings of the Forum.

The following comments were made/issues raised:-

- It was proposed that the Forum could receive a presentation about accessibility and disability that could incorporate physical access issues, but also other aspects of accessibility such as how autism can affect interactions with outdoor spaces.
- It was suggested that a review of Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) policy would be useful for Members, with a specific focus on how PSPOs are reviewed and whether input from stakeholders could be considered.
- It was requested that an item on equestrian access improvements and multi-user inclusion be brought to the Forum.
- Members noted that electrically assisted forms of travel such as e-scooters were increasing, and that this issue may be of interest to the Forum within the next year. It was suggested that this could be included in a potential report on multi-user inclusion.

RESOLVED – That the position be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.00 pm