

COMMUNITIES & TRANSPORT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting: 12 June 2023

At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

Councillor Joe Barratt (Chair) in the chair; Councillor Matt Wynne (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Steve Gribbon, Yvonne Guariento, Dominic Hardwick, Tom Morrison,
Rachel Wise and Ian Powney.

1. MINUTES

The Minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meeting held on 27 February 2023 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 interests were declared:-

Personal

Officer

Interest

Paul Richards Agenda Item 4 – ‘Life Leisure Annual Report’ as a
member of the Board of Directors.

Councillor

Interest

Matt Wynne Agenda Item 4 – ‘Life Leisure Annual Report’ as a
member of Life Leisure.

3. CALL-IN

There were no call-in items to consider.

4. LIFE LEISURE ANNUAL REPORT

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) outlining Life Leisure’s performance during its first year of operation as a Community Interest Company (CIC) wholly owned by the council. It also described the challenges and successes it had experienced within its first 12 months of trading.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- In response to a query about how the service had been made more inclusive and appealing to residents, it was stated that the rebranding had assisted in appearing less harsh from a marketing point of view. Furthermore, Life Leisure had worked with SEND groups and new partners across the borough to introduce new activities and redesigned its membership offer to a more attractive and competitive pricing point.
- In response to a query in relation to staff retention, it was reported that, post pandemic, staff retention was a world-wide problem, however Life Leisure had a full workforce and had managed to keep all of its facilities open. It was reported that Life Leisure had undertaken a workforce engagement survey to inform the development of a strong work plan to improve staff retention at Life Leisure.
- It was commented that continuous growth in relation to membership was positive, although recognised that Life Leisure may never compete with the private sector.
- It was commented that whilst the report was positive, it was disappointing that crèche facilities had closed under Life Leisure's previous guise. Members queried whether there were any plans to offer crèche facilities in the future.
- In response, it was reported that crèche facilities had not been well used and were expensive to run and although the facilities could return, should they become financially sustainable, it was a challenging proposition, particularly considering the required staff to child ratio.
- It was commented that whilst crèche facilities were costly, the physical and mental health benefits of the service were important and that the provision of such a facility would differentiate the service from private facilities.
- Members requested that Life Leisure review the provision of crèche facilities and to consider the social value against the economic cost.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

5. COMMUNITIES AND HOUSING. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENT AND HIGHWAYS, PARKS AND LEISURE SERVICES PORTFOLIO PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES REPORTS: QUARTER 4/YEAR-END REPORTS

The Director of Place Management submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) outlining the Portfolio Reports based on the 2022/23 Portfolio Performance and Resource Agreements (PPRAs) and providing a comprehensive summary of progress against portfolio priorities, performance indicators and budgets during 2022/23, but with a specific focus on the fourth quarter (January to March 2023).

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

Communities and Housing

- It was noted that there had been an increase in pressure in terms of homelessness at both a national and local level which would now become a priority for the Cabinet Member for Economy, Regeneration and Housing.
- Members noted that take up of pension credit had the capacity to make a big difference to a lot of people and queried whether any work was being undertaken to encourage take up of Healthy Start vouchers.

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- In response, it was confirmed that work was being undertaken in relation to the uptake of Healthy Start vouchers and a briefing note providing an update would be circulated to Members.
- Members welcomed the positive work undertaken to support the refugee and migrant communities, in particular in supporting the provision of healthy and culturally appropriate foods, and queried the current level of Government support in relation to the refugee and migrant communities.
- In response, it was commented that government support for Afghan refugees had come to an end and that the council had worked to offer support in the absence of government support. It was further reported that government funding overall was inadequate, particularly related to helping refugee and migrant children obtain school places to help them feel safe.
- In relation to a query around Ukrainian refugees, it was reported that many of the arrivals from the Ukraine had moved into private rented accommodation or returned to the Ukraine, however the council was continuing to support 89 households. It was noted that there were concerns in relation to supporting Ukrainian refugees with private rental costs.
- In relation to the imminent closure of a hotel housing Afghan refugees, it was queried whether there were any plans for a housing emergency and whether the council planned to build social housing.
- In response, it was stated that the challenge of building affordable social housing was a key focus of the Cabinet Member for Economy, Regeneration and Housing and going forward would not be in the remit of this Scrutiny Committee.
- It was noted that the number of volunteers in the volunteer hub had more than doubled.
- It was requested that full indicator names to be viewable on future reports submitted to the committee.
- In relation to tackling domestic and other gender-based abuse, it was suggested that a cross-party campaign to provide support and awareness for White Ribbon UK should be implemented.
- In response, it was confirmed that a motion had been passed at a meeting of the Council a few years earlier and that Stockport Council was an accredited organisation to the White Ribbon UK charity.
- It was requested that an item in relation to the pilot of the Stockport Homes Cuckooing Project be programmed into the Scrutiny Committee's work programme.
- Members requested that clarification be provided in relation to the transition from The Safer Stockport Partnership to the One Stockport Safety Partnership.

Highways, Parks and Leisure

- It was commented that it would be useful for the committee to understand the scope of the review in relation to Totally Local Company (TLC) savings and productivity which was due to be presented to the Corporate, Resource Management and Governance Scrutiny Committee.
- In response, it was stated that the Parks, Highways and Transport Services Portfolio procured services from the TLC and that the review covered elements of work under that portfolio. It was noted that work was underway to explore the way that capital and revenue services had been delivered by TLC and consideration was being given to how those services could become more streamlined.

- It was reported that a key feature of the review of the TLC included amendments to the governance structure which would enable the council to exercise its rights and responsibilities as the sole shareholder and that the work of TLC would be narrowed to core activities and there would be a reduction in the TLC's independence from the council.
- In relation to fly-tipping incidents and the use of cheap 'man and van' services for the disposal of waste, it was noted that approximately one in six Stockport residents did not have a car and may not be able to drive waste to a council owned waste and recycling centre.
- In response, it was commented that the intention was not to persecute individuals who use those services but those who fly tip waste and the report was intended to raise awareness that in some instances 'man and van' services were not regulated.
- It was requested that the number of reports of fly-tipping should continue to be included as a metric in future reports submitted for consideration by the committee.
- It was queried whether a metric assessment could be included in future reports on the number of blocked grids and gullies across the borough.
- In response, it was reported that there was a long-term programme of work for unblocking gullies and grids and that capital funds have been set aside to clear grids that cannot be unblocked via jetting. It was noted that the programme had been curtailed during the pandemic but had since stabilised and there was a criteria to prioritise the unblocking of gullies. It was commented that the three-year rolling programme involved checking certain gullies where problems were known on a more regular annual or six monthly basis, however no monitoring exercises were undertaken by the council to check which grids and gullies were blocked and members of the public were able to report blockages using an online form.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

6. PORTFOLIO PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES - DRAFT 2023/24 PORTFOLIO AGREEMENTS

The Director of Place Management submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) presenting the draft 2023/24 Agreements for Communities, Culture & Sport and Parks, Highways & Transport Services Portfolios for consideration and comment by the committee.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

Communities, Culture and Sport

- Members queried the sample sizes and statistics relating to the Greater Manchester Community Safety Survey.
- In response, it was stated that in terms of the statistical differences, the questions were slightly different and in terms of the sample size, the exact figure was not known, but it would likely be a few hundred.
- It was queried whether the Community Safety Survey was the best way to measure important metrics, such as people feeling safe in their community. It was suggested that it would be useful to have figures for different areas of Stockport in terms of more localised experiences of crime.

- It was noted that the Greater Manchester Police (GMP) had acknowledged that the statistics on the numbers of reported crimes were not accurate which made future measuring of crime against past statistics difficult. Although numbers of reported crimes increasing was not positive, it was important to encourage the public to report crimes. It was noted that GMP were no longer in special measures and in the future it was expected that there would be an improvement in the statistics provided by GMP.
- Members queried whether the number of anti-social behaviour reviews could be recorded as a performance indicator in future reports. In response, it was stated that officers would look into that data and a written response would be provided.
- Members queried whether it would be possible to include qualitative data in respect of visits to museums and libraries alongside quantitative data. It was also queried whether the targets for encouraging people who had not previously visited museums and libraries could be included in future as a performance indicator.

Parks, Highways and Transport Services

- Members queried whether future reports should include KPIs on sustainable transport.
- In response, it was stated that sustainable transport schemes had their own evaluation and it might be difficult to measure as one KPI, although there was a commitment to report back to this committee on some of the larger sustainable transport schemes.
- Members queried the reasoning behind the proposal to change the KPI for fly tipping and stated that the public were less concerned with how quickly the council was dealing with fly tipping and more concerned about what the council was doing in terms of consequences for the perpetrators. It was also suggested that the change in the KPI should be delayed until a review of fines for fly tipping had been carried out.
- In response, it was stated that seven fines had been issued for fly tipping in the previous calendar year and that the previous KPI was based on the number of reports of fly tipping received by the council which was out of its control.
- Members commented that a change to the enforcement policy in relation to fly tipping might be more effective than the 90 per cent clearance target.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

7. TRANSPORTATION CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2023 - 2024 UPDATE

The Director of Place Management submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) setting out the proposed Transportation Capital Programme for 2023 - 2024.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- Members queried the current position regarding the School Street scheme.
- In response, it was reported that the scheme had been a one-off funding programme from Greater Manchester for a limited period of time. A number of School Street schemes had continued in Stockport and officers had been trying to support those schemes, however there was no funding available to support this work. Support from parents and schools was required to maintain those schemes which could be challenging in the long term.
- Members queried the provision of sustainable transport.

- In response, it was reported that individual biking and walking routes were monitored and that some schemes were more successful than others. The council was working towards a network of walking and cycling for local journeys which was expected to be more effective than individual schemes.
- Members queried how the £240,000 budget for district centres was planned to be spent and requested that the budget be allocated equally across the borough.
- In response it was stated that the budget would largely go towards paving and maintenance improvement schemes such as repairing the gullies in Hazel Grove district centre.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

8. THE BEE NETWORK - IMPROVING GREATER MANCHESTER'S TRANSPORT GOVERNANCE

The Director of Place Management submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing details of the new Greater Manchester Bee Network Committee which would replace the existing Greater Manchester Transport Committee and sub committees. The creation of Greater Manchester's (GM's) integrated transport system, the Bee Network, would require a more coordinated and integrated approach to transport governance, which places accountability to local people at its heart.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- Members expressed concerns that, in combining decision making functions, the proposals might lead to a weakening of the scrutiny function.
- In response, it was reported that the Cabinet Member for Parks, Highways and Transport Services would sit on the Committee as the representative from Stockport and that the first meeting of the Committee was scheduled to take place at the end of July.
- Members welcomed the more slimmed down, executive approach.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

9. MOVING TRAFFIC OFFENCES ENFORCEMENT REPORT

The Director of Place Management submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) outlining the proposal for Stockport Council to take on powers to manage moving traffic contraventions and apply to the Secretary of State (SoS) for a Designation Order to obtain moving traffic enforcement (MTE) powers. It was further proposed that, once it had the powers, the council would start to roll out enforcement at relevant sites.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- In response to a query relating to a six month grace period prior to enforcement action taking place, it was stated that the grace period was a government recommended timescale for a first offence only.
- Members noted the recent notification regarding the bus lane penalty charge notices and queried if there was a grace period in place.
- In response it was stated that the grace period was 12 weeks for a first offence.

- Members queried whether the cameras could be used for other purposes such as checking for uninsured drivers or other vehicular related crimes.
- In response, it was stated that strict data protection rules were in place for the images captured. A government licence was required for every camera and there were strict requirements in place for the purpose of each.
- It was reported that once the council had powers of enforcement, decisions could be made as to the best locations for cameras where the majority of issues occur.
- It was requested that the strategy for the placement of cameras across the borough be considered as part of the Scrutiny Committee's work programme.
- In terms of obtaining the powers of enforcement, it was reported that the process was in the early stages and the authority was required to submit an expression of interest before October, after which it was expected that a decision would be made around Spring of 2024.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

10. NEXT STOP STOCKPORT

The Director of Place Management submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) highlighting the centrality of Metrolink connectivity to Stockport to sustain the progress of the town centre over the last decade and catalyse its future role as a major driver of employment and housing growth for the borough and the wider conurbation. It provided an update on recent work being undertaken to translate that potential into reality and set out what was needed to realise the ambition for Metrolink to come to the Borough.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- It was commented that the Greater Manchester Mayor had been elected on a policy of introducing the Metrolink to Stockport and queried why Stockport Council was now required to put forward a business case.
- In response, it was reported that there were a number of borough's who expressed an interest in Metrolink access and that the purpose of the business case was to outline Stockport's case for making the Mayor's commitment into a reality. It was noted that funding for the business case would be provided by Greater Manchester.
- Members welcomed the report and commented that any improvement in public transport was a positive outcome for residents.
- It was commented that it was already easy to travel from the centre of Stockport to Manchester City Centre and that trams would be more useful in certain parts of the borough where train travel is limited.
- In response, it was stated that the current report outlined the initial step on the road to getting the Metrolink for Stockport and that consideration would be given to extending the routes around the borough. It was commented that it was an ambition to have a tram link from Stockport to Manchester Airport and another to East Didsbury.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

11. FAIR AND INCLUSIVE ANNUAL REPORT

The Director of Adult and Social Care submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) setting out the contribution Stockport Council has made to deliver the Fair and Inclusive strand of the Borough Plan during 2022-23.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- Members queried how the cost of living crisis had impacted on the provision of the projects outlined in the report.
- In response it was reported that Stockport Council had been quick to respond to the cost of living crisis by working with key partners such as Age UK and Disability Stockport and had increased the amount in the Stockport local fund, warm spaces and spend well live well. It had also invested in the residents' advisory service to give advice about welfare and benefits and it had introduced a cost of living line which had been well used.
- It was queried whether stakeholders had been invited to design services.
- In response, it was stated that whilst co-design was useful in creating better designed services, it was an expensive and time-consuming process. In the light of that, the council was working on a strategic approach to choose which services would incorporate co-design. In the meantime, a more light-touch engagement process was in place. It was commented that a report on this topic, including a set of strategic principles, would be provided to a future meeting of the committee.
- Members were encouraged to engage with and help residents, particularly more vulnerable members of the community, to benefit from the bin collection scheme.
- In response to a query relating to wheelchair accessible playground equipment, it was reported that installation of such equipment was based on available community funding and Members were encouraged to put forward suggestions for equipment wanted in their local areas.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

12. SCRUTINY REVIEW TOPIC SELECTION

A representative of the Assistant Director - Legal & Democratic Governance (Monitoring Officer) invited the Scrutiny Committee to choose a Scrutiny Review topic for inclusion in the 2023/24 scrutiny work programme.

The following comments were made/ issued raised:-

- It was suggested that the resilience of the water supply for Stockport Homes tenants be considered as a scrutiny review topic.
- It was suggested that how the council can explore unlocking Stockport's communal corridors be considered as a scrutiny review topic.
- It was suggested that the quality of data around crime safety, anti-social behaviour and fly tipping be considered as a scrutiny review topic.
- In relation to the accountability deficit of the Blue Light Committee, it was suggested that the accountability between the council and Greater Manchester Police be considered as a scrutiny review topic.

- It was suggested that gullies, drainage and flooding be considered as a scrutiny review topic.

RESOLVED – (1) That one of the following scrutiny review topics be selected for the 2023/24 Scrutiny Work Programme by Members via email in advance of the upcoming meeting of Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee:

- The resilience of the water supply for Stockport Homes tenants.
- Stockport's communal corridors.
- A look into the accountability between the council and Greater Manchester Police.
- Gullies, drainage and flooding.

(2) That Councillor Matt Wynne be nominated to Chair the proposed scrutiny review panel with other membership to be determined by email.

13. AGENDA PLANNING

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

It was requested that an agenda item related to details on the council's website on private renters' rights be included on the relevant Scrutiny Committee's agenda.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the Assistant Director - Legal & Democratic Governance (Monitoring Officer) be recommended to programme the following items into the Scrutiny Committee's work programme for the 2023/24 Municipal Year:

- Review of the provision of creche facilities at Life Leisure
- Pilot of the Stockport Homes cuckooing project
- Fair and Inclusive Stockport strategic approach to service co-design

The meeting closed at 8.11 pm