

## **COMMUNITIES & TRANSPORT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Meeting: 4 September 2023

At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

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

### **1. MINUTES**

The Minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meetings held on 12 and 29 June 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

#### Councillor

#### Interest

Dominic Hardwick	Agenda Item 4 – ‘Stockport’s Voluntary Community Faith Social Enterprise (VCFSE) Sector Strategy Progress’ – as a regular attendee at Norbury Parish Church, also known as St Thomas, Hazel Grove.
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### **3. CALL-IN**

There were no call-in items to consider.

### **4. STOCKPORT'S VOLUNTARY COMMUNITY FAITH AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISE (VCFSE) SECTOR STRATEGY PROGRESS**

The Director of Strategy submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) setting out the important operational and strategic role played by Stockport’s Voluntary Community Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) Sector in achieving the ambitions set out in the One Stockport Borough Plan. It also outlined a number of challenges, in terms of increasing demand for services and the availability of sustainable funding.

The Cabinet Member for Communities, Culture & Sport (Councillor Frankie Singleton) attended the meeting to respond to councillors’ questions.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- Members commented on the links between the voluntary sector and Stockport's Area Committees, with particular reference to the work carried out in the Heatons area which had identified numerous residents who were entitled to claim benefits which they had not claimed. Members queried how such schemes could be initiated in their own areas.
- In response it was stated that the Heatons project had come about as a result of joint working between a GP Practice which had identified patients who may have been eligible for benefits and local volunteers. Members were encouraged to contact relevant officers in order to pursue schemes in their local areas.
- Work was taking place to support VCFSE organisations to become 'commission ready' by helping those organisations to develop leadership skills and support with access to funding, infrastructure and organisational governance which could help them to grow.
- The importance of sustainable funding and remuneration for voluntary organisations was noted.
- Members commented upon the importance and benefits of Stockport's warm spaces scheme and queried how this service was advertised to those who experienced deprivation and isolation.
- In response it was stated that volunteers delivering the warm spaces facilities had been provided with marketing tools enabling them to identify and target housebound or vulnerable residents. It was also reported that it was hoped that a digital element would be provided within the next warm spaces scheme.
- Digital inclusion was highlighted as a significant factor in financial inclusion as in many cases it was only possible for residents to shop around for better deals online.
- It was reported that the 'Spend Well, Live Well' programme ran year-round. That scheme took information on an area committee basis to identify what digital deprivation looked like within local communities and then the roadshows held in those areas were tailored to needs of that area.
- It was also reported that libraries were a valuable resource for the warm spaces programme and that fun activities designed to develop digital skills had been introduced.
- It was stated that it would be helpful if 'Team Around the Place' could engage with councillors on a more formalised basis as councillors had a lot of insight and intelligence that they could offer. It was also suggested that a report on Team Around the Place could be brought to each area committee in order to align the work of that organisation more closely with area committees.
- It was noted that many more residents within Stockport gave up their time to volunteer such as school governors, scout leaders and sports coaches who were not included within the numbers of volunteers within the Volunteer Hub. The Volunteer Hub was designed to support residents who wanted to volunteer but did not know where to start. It was an emerging project and was therefore a key performance indicator for the work of the council.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

## **5. INTERCHANGE PARK UPDATE**

The Director of Place Management submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) updating the Scrutiny Committee as to progress made in the design, construction and plans to animate the park on top of the new Interchange. The report also

aimed to gauge the views of members and to facilitate contribution to the final development stage prior to the grand opening in Spring 2024.

The Cabinet Member for Parks, Highways & Transport Services (Councillor Grace Baynham) attended the meeting to respond to councillors' questions.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- Members queried what the proposed security arrangements would be for the park.
- In response, it was stated that the park had been designed with a reduction in the need for physical security interventions in mind. The park was oval-shaped and therefore had no corners, was well lit, had wide-spaces, lighting and planting. It was also intended that the close proximity of the new residential accommodation and commercial would ensure animation of the space.
- It was important that the community felt a sense of ownership of the park to mitigate against the potential for anti-social behaviour to develop.
- It was commented that people were unlikely to choose to go to a particular park because of the presence of police or security but rather that it became a space that was well-used and well loved. It was further stated that if issues arose, then appropriate action would be taken.
- Further information was requested in relation to the ongoing maintenance of the park and the approach to community safety.
- It was stated that CCTV had not been designed into the current security arrangements for the park.
- Careful consideration had been given to the heights of the parapets and barriers for the area overlooking the centre of the interchange development.
- Members noted that the park was scheduled to open on time in the summer of 2024, that it was a welcome and positive addition to the town centre which should last for generations.
- It was stated that the report was also due to be considered at the Economy, Regeneration & Climate Change Scrutiny Committee on 7 September 2023.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report and the progress in the development of the park be noted.

(2) That the Scrutiny Committee confirms its support for the use existing funding to maintain and develop the park.

## **6. ONE STOCKPORT SAFETY PARTNERSHIP (OSSP) AND CUCKOOING PROJECT UPDATE**

The Director of Place Management and the Director of Strategy submitted a joint report (copies of which had been circulated) providing an update about the One Stockport Safety Partnership and an overview on the Stockport Cuckooing Project.

The Cabinet Member for Communities, Culture & Sport (Councillor Frankie Singleton) attended the meeting to respond to councillors' questions.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- Members asked about people with learning difficulties or those using drugs and whether they were particularly vulnerable to cuckooing.
- In response it was stated that the project was in the process of developing a list of those most likely to be at risk of exploitation. It was stated that those with learning difficulties had been identified as potential victims of cuckooing. Stockport Homes tenants had been vetted for their vulnerability to cuckooing at the point of signing up to a tenancy and more work was being carried out in the wider community to try to protect private rented sector tenants.
- A peer service was in development to allow those who had previously been the victim of cuckooing to help others.
- In response to a question about victims of cuckooing who refused to engage with support officers, it was stated that agencies worked hard to support and encourage engagement through a variety of means. In some limited and specific cases where tenants would not accept help, Anti-Social Behaviour Orders had been made in order to safeguard the wider community.
- In terms of intelligence, it was stated that it was often the public or the police who identified incidents of cuckooing, although it was noted that cuckooing was not currently a crime.
- Officers stated that mental health was an element which was frequently a factor amongst cuckooing victims. However, access to mental health services can be complex and difficult which meant that those services have not always been present as part of multi-disciplinary meetings.
- Data analysis was underway to compare the extent of cuckooing within Stockport with cases across other Greater Manchester boroughs.
- Members stated that it would be useful for them to consider the possibility of cuckooing when they receive reports of anti-social behaviour.
- It was noted that Oldham and Salford Councils had abolish intentionality decision in relation to homelessness for under-25s, and it was queried whether Stockport intended to do the same.
- It was queried whether the Council published a sufficiency strategy for care and whether the Council had a complete picture of the number of spaces it needed for looked after children.
- In response it was stated that finding placements for care leavers was a priority for the council and lots of work was being done to find placements across Stockport and Greater Manchester. Furthermore work was being done to assist care leavers with training and housing.
- In relation to the serious violence duty and the need for each council area to identify strategic needs, it was reported that the One Stockport Safety Partnership was due to meet the following week and meetings had already taken place with Greater Manchester Police.
- Members referred to the Josh McAllister review of social care which had found negative consequences for siblings in care who had been split up and it was stated that it should be a priority for the council to ensure that that every effort be made to keep families together.
- In terms of future reporting, it was stated that the Committee would receive an annual One Safer Stockport Partnership report. It was requested that this report should also include an update on the cuckooing project.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

## **7. STOCKPORT CHILDREN BOOK AWARDS 2023**

The Director of Place Management submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) on the Stockport Children's Book Award scheme, a reading for pleasure programme run by Stockport Libraries and aimed at Stockport primary schools. It supported literacy and democracy in school age children (5-11). The programme had been running for 27 years and had particularly grown in recent years to become an event that many schools and families look forward to each year.

The Cabinet Member for Communities, Culture & Sport (Councillor Frankie Singleton) attended the meeting to respond to councillors' questions.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:

- Members asked how more schools could be encouraged to take part in the scheme and in response, they were encouraged to speak to schools in their wards and explain the scheme.
- The 2023 book award winners were 'The Drama Llama' in the best picture book category, 'Max Counts to a Million' in the best juniors category; and 'The Colour of Hope' in the best upper juniors category.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

## **8. PORTFOLIO DASHBOARDS**

The Scrutiny Committee was given the opportunity to consider the portfolio dashboards for the Communities, Culture & Sport; and the Parks, Highways & Transport Services portfolios and raise any issues with regard to performance.

RESOLVED – That the portfolio dashboards be noted.

## **9. 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.

The Assistant Director for Legal & Democratic Governance was requested to liaise with relevant council Officers to programme the dates on which reports requested by Member would appear on the agenda for the Scrutiny Committee.

It was further 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 for 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:

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- An update on the Growing Equities Networks.
- An update from the One Safer Stockport Partnership.

The meeting closed at 7.40 pm