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ECONOMY, REGENERATION & CLIMATE CHANGE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting: 15 June 2023

At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

Councillor Claire Vibert (Chair) in the chair; Councillor Dena Ryness (Vice-Chair); Councillors Will Dawson, Helen Foster-Grime, James Frizzell, Ian Hunter, Ian Powney, John Taylor and Pete West.

1. MINUTES

The minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meeting held on 2 March 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 they had in any of the items on the agenda for the meeting.

The following interests were declared:

Personal Interests

Officer

Interest

Paul Richards

Agenda item 11 'Stockport Mayoral Development Corporation Business Plan 2023-28' as Chief Executive of the Mayoral Development Corporation.

Agenda item 13 'Stockport Exchange Phase 5' as Director of Exchange Phases 2 and 3.

3. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PUBLIC INTEREST TEST

RESOLVED - That the press and public be excluded for the following items of business (if required) as exempt by virtue of Paragraph 3, Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972 as containing information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the local authority):

- agenda item 11 'Stockport Mayoral Development Corporation Business Plan 2023-38';
- agenda item 12 'Former Ritz Cinema Car Park, Fletcher Street Update'; and
- agenda item 13 'Stockport Exchange Phase 5'.

4. CALL-IN

There were no call-in items to consider.

5. ECONOMY & REGENERATION AND CLIMATE CHANGE & ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES REPORTS: 2022/23 ANNUAL REPORTS

A representative of the Deputy Chief Executive submitted reports (copies of which had been circulated) which provided a quarter 4 update (January to March 2023) and Annual Report (2022/23) for each of the Economy, Regeneration and Housing and Climate Change and Environment portfolios.

The Cabinet Member for Economy, Regeneration and Housing (Councillor Colin MacAlister) and the Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment (Councillor Mark Roberts) attended the meeting to respond to questions from the Scrutiny Committee.

The following comments were made/ issues raised in relation to the Economy, Regeneration and Housing portfolio:

- It was asked whether the reports relating to the policies developed for the Draft Local Plan and considered by the Development Plan Working Party could be shared with the Scrutiny Committee. The Cabinet Member advised that members could view the reports and that groups would also have input into the working party.
- It was noted that the GM Good Employment Charter was a Greater Manchester scheme. Members were advised that further detail as to the types of employers signed up to the scheme would be circulated to the Scrutiny Committee. An event was scheduled to be held on Friday 16 June 2023 to promote the scheme and encourage more employers to sign up to the scheme.
- The team were looking at how to improve measures E&R2.1 'Planning Breaches – complaints' and E&R2.2 'Planning Breaches – formal action' to better reflect the service.

The following comments were made/ issues raised in relation to the Climate Change and Environment portfolio:

- The team had worked hard to develop Climate Action Now (CAN) training for members, and members were encouraged to sign up the training to become carbon literate.
- Thanks were expressed to the young people involved for their initiative on biodegradable period products for schools, and to the team, councillors and officers, for supporting the implementation in all Stockport schools. It was hoped that the initiative could be rolled out across Greater Manchester. It was agreed that engaging young people, businesses and Stockport's communities as a whole was important in reducing Stockport's carbon footprint.
- It was noted that Stockport was used as a case study of good practice for other local authorities in relation to the work of the council in helping to tackle climate change.
- Members were advised that Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points had been installed for taxi and private hire vehicles but were not yet connected to the power supply, as the grid did not have capacity to support the charging points. This was a challenge nationally, and it was hoped that news from government as to how to combat this challenge would be forthcoming.

- Members were pleased to see the progress made in improving EV charging infrastructure, namely, the £15 million private investment into publicly accessible EV charging infrastructure that would deliver for the whole borough.

RESOLVED – That the reports be noted.

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

A representative of the Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which detailed the draft 2023/24 portfolio agreements for the Economy, Regeneration and Housing and the Climate Change and Environment portfolios.

The Cabinet Member for Economy, Regeneration and Housing (Councillor Colin MacAlister) and the Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment (Councillor Mark Roberts) attended the meeting to respond to questions from the Scrutiny Committee.

The following comments were made/ issues raised in relation to the Economy, Regeneration and Housing portfolio:

- It was asked whether interim or indicative targets could be set for measure ERH 1.1 and ERH 1.2 within priority 1 'delivering ambitious housing projects'. It was noted that outturn would be difficult to predict, however the measures would be reviewed with planning colleagues to see whether interim targets could be set.
- In relation to priority 2 'managing and maintaining our housing stock and tackling homelessness', it was noted that the Member Committee oversaw the performance of Stockport Homes Group (SHG).
- It was noted that measure ERH 2.1 related to the number of properties that had come back into use, including where the council had intervened.
- Members were advised of the challenges the council, and other local authorities, faced in trying to tackle homelessness which included but was not limited to, the increasing number of people needing accommodation and the cost of private rented accommodation. The team were working hard to reduce the numbers as much as possible. It was suggested that additional narrative be included for measure ERH 2.23 relating to homelessness to enable members to better assess the situation.
- Members were advised that there were three different types of measures, measures two and three were 'partnership' and 'contextual' measures respectively, and were more difficult for the council to control.
- It was questioned as to whether damp, mould and condensation (DMC) in homes was a high enough priority within the portfolio.
- It was expected that approximately 400 affordable homes would be delivered in the town centre in a proposed forthcoming scheme.
- It was noted that measure ERH 3.2 should read 'number of planning breaches as a % of all planning applications'.
- It was noted that the vast majority of planning breaches were resolved by negotiation with the applicant. If further action was taken, this was then included within the measure.
- Setting a numerical target for measure ERH 3.9 would prove difficult as footfall was impacted by a number of issues which included but was not limited to, the covid-19

pandemic, national rail strikes and hybrid working. It was noted that footfall had increased since the beginning of 2023.

- Priority 4 'supporting the business base in Stockport' - it was suggested that further narrative as to the break down by district centre be included within future reports.
- Priority 5 'improving access to work for all and working to ensure our workforce have the skills that employers need' - it was asked that data be sought as to the number of apprenticeships being provided by Stockport Council and other organisations, and circulated to the Scrutiny Committee for their information.

The following comments were made/ issues raised in relation to the Climate Change and Environment portfolio:

- Priority 1 'mainstreaming Climate Action Now (CAN)' – it was felt that community engagement and resident participation was important in helping to achieve CAN goals for Stockport; young people specifically were acutely aware about climate change.
- Approximately 200 university students and leaders in marketing were involved in a piece of work to tackle messaging around climate change for a number of companies in the North of England; an update on the progress of this piece of work would be brought to a future meeting of the Climate Action Now Steering Group.
- Priority 2 'renewable energy and efficiency' – lots of work was being done to improve energy efficiency and the uptake of renewable energy sources across the council's estate and the borough more widely. Specifically, members were encouraged to feedback any schools that they think would be interested in installing solar panels. The council were already engaging with schools to ascertain interest.

RESOLVED – That the reports be noted.

7. CLIMATE ACTION NOW (CAN) ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

A representative of the Director of Place Management submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) outlining the progress made by the council to implement the CAN programme over the last financial year 2022-23.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:

- Great work had been going on across Stockport in response to climate action, but there was more work to be done. Members were encouraged to bring forward ideas that could help the council to achieve its CAN goals.
- A Local Nature Recovery Group was due to be established and would include two members from each party. It was hoped that the first meeting of the group would take place in July and where the scope of the group's work could be agreed. It was also hoped that members on the group would have carbon literacy training and therefore a high level of knowledge in relation to climate change.
- The 'turn it off' campaign had been relaunched to encourage people to turn off their cars when doing school pick-ups and drop-offs.
- It was heard that the Town Centre Renewable Energy District Heating Network could be a game-changer in helping Stockport to reach the borough's carbon reduction target. The proposal was in its early stages, but was incredibly exciting.

- The council had been awarded £35,000 from government to take part in a pilot scheme which would explore the creation of 'zones' mandating new developments and existing large consumers of heating energy and producers of significant excess heat energy to join district heating networks.

RESOLVED – (1) That the progress achieved since the CAN annual report issued in July 2022 be noted.

(2) That the publication of a modified version of the report on the council's website and case studies be endorsed for approval.

(3) That the need for acceleration in action to meet the challenge of remaining within the borough's carbon budget set by the GM wide 2038 carbon neutrality target be noted.

8. DRAFT STOCKPORT LOCAL PLAN

The Cabinet Member for Economy, Regeneration and Housing (Councillor Colin MacAlister) provided a verbal update on the Draft Local Plan. It was noted that the plan had been paused in December 2022 in light of the national situation and subsequent consultation. Local authorities were awaiting news from government as to the outcome of the National Planning Policy Framework consultation; the council was not in a position to begin consulting on the draft plan at this stage.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

9. SCRUTINY REVIEW TOPIC SELECTION

The Scrutiny Committee was invited to choose a topic for their next review.

The following suggestions were made:

- to review how Section 106 monies were being used to support CAN goals;
- the effect of pesticides on our biodiversity; and
- the public accountability and performance of Stockport Homes Group (SHG).

It was agreed that the Clerk would seek further information as to whether the public accountability and performance of SHG topic would be within the remit of the Member Committee or Scrutiny Committee. Further information would be circulated to members and a topic chosen by the Scrutiny Committee in due course.

10. AGENDA PLANNING

A representative of the Assistant Director for Legal and Democratic Governance submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which set out the work programme the Scrutiny Committee, and detailed forward plan items that fell within the remit of the committee for information.

The following suggestions were made:

- The active neighbourhoods report be removed as it no longer fell within the portfolio.
- A report on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund be brought to a future meeting of the committee.
- A detailed report on homelessness be brought to a future meeting of the committee.
- To receive a presentation from Totally Stockport on the work of the Stockport Business Improvement District (BID) in improving the offering in Stockport Town Centre.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the Assistant Director for Legal and Democratic Governance be requested to make arrangements for items to be programmed onto the agenda for future meetings of the Scrutiny Committee in relation to the above suggestions, and that the Active Neighbourhoods report be removed from the work programme.

Items containing information 'Not for Publication'

11. STOCKPORT MAYORAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION BUSINESS PLAN 2023-28

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which set out the Stockport Mayoral Development Corporation (MDC) Strategic Business Plan and Annual Action Plan for consideration.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:

- The report was considered by members of the Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis, and adopted by council and the combined authority.
- It was noted that the development pipeline for the MDC was considerable, and the plan made commitments around progress and targets to build.
- Members were advised that the English Cities Fund had excellent credentials in delivering green developments.
- Consultation with the community was important and there was a commitment to carry out early engagement as projects came forward.

RESOLVER – (1) That the report and appendices be noted.

(2) That the All Member briefing as per section 1.6 of the report be noted.

12. FORMER RITZ CINEMA CAR PARK, FLETCHER STREET UPDATE

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which sought Cabinet approval to dispose of the former Ritz Cinema Car Park, Fletcher Street.

Members noted that the aspiration for the site was a high quality residential development that would contribute to delivering housing numbers in the borough. A 250 year development lease would enable the council to control the deliverability of the site, and was a standard lease term length.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

13. STOCKPORT EXCHANGE PHASE 5

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which sought Cabinet approval for funding to undertake an update and refresh of the Stockport Exchange Masterplan, to secure detailed planning permission for Stockport Exchange Phase 5 for a building of circa 65,000 sq. ft together with outline planning permission for Phases 6, 7 and 8 Stockport Exchange by way of a hybrid planning application.

It was noted that a tour of the developments had been arranged last year, and could be a worthwhile activity for members to undertake this year.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.44 pm