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ECONOMY, REGENERATION & CLIMATE CHANGE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting: 12 October 2023

At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

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

1. MINUTES

The minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meeting held on 15 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 they had in any of the items on the agenda for the meeting.

The following interest was declared:

<u>Officer</u>	<u>Interest</u>
Mark Glynn	Agenda item 5 - 'Responding to our Medium-Term Financial Plan' as Chair of the Totally Local Company (TLC) Board. TLC were referenced within the report.

3. CALL-IN

There were no call-in items to consider.

4. RESPONDING TO OUR MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN

The Cabinet Member for Economy, Regeneration & Housing (Councillor Colin MacAlister) and the Cabinet Member for Climate Change & Environment (Councillor Mark Roberts) submitted reports (copies of which had been circulated) outlining the council's strategic approach in responding to the medium-term financial plan.

The Cabinet Members were in attendance at the meeting to respond to questions from the Scrutiny Committee.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:

- It was noted that the intention of the review of the provision of food caddy liners to households was to improve efficiencies. Members heard that, in many cases, people were not using as many liners as were being provided which had led to waste.
- In response to a query as to whether a charge would be implemented for green waste collections, it was advised that there was nothing specific to report relating to green

waste collections at present; crew workloads were currently being reviewed as part of the waste review and further detail would be considered by the Scrutiny Committee at their meeting in November.

- It was reported that there was a high level of confidence that the savings in the plan could be achieved.
- In response to a question as to whether the number of waste collections would be reduced, it was noted that the Member Committee had previously reviewed the service provided by TLC and further detail would be presented to members in November.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

5. UPDATE ON CREATING STRONG, VIBRANT AND HEALTHY DISTRICT CENTRES

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing an update on how the council was working with stakeholders to support the development of the borough's eight district centres. Detail on progress to date in delivering the District Centre Action Plans was attached at appendix A.

The Cabinet Member for Economy, Regeneration & Housing (Councillor Colin MacAlister) attended the meeting to respond to questions from the Scrutiny Committee.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:

- The 'Brilliant Businesses Bouncing' campaign to encourage residents to support their local district centre had been well-received, with 25,000 views of the campaign video. It was reported that local businesses were appreciative of the campaign and the work going on in supporting the development of district and local centres.
- It was noted that a website for local centres was in the process of being set up.
- The programme of work to support the development of district centres was commended, and it was noted that the progress in the Cheadle district centre had been significant. It was suggested that opportunities for funding be continued to be sought in supporting this work.
- It was noted that footfall counters remained operational in district centres.
- It was also noted that measuring vacancy rates enabled the council to compare district centres to each other, and to other district centres nationally.
- It was suggested that how the additional £40,000 funding was allocated to district centres from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund be reviewed, namely, whether the funding amount could be allocated by need as opposed to split equally among the 8 district centres.

Thanks were expressed for the work undertaken by members and officers in supporting the development of the district centres.

RESOLVED – (1) That the progress in delivering actions within the District Centre Action Plans be noted.

(2) That the additional £40,000 allocated to District Centres from UKSPF to be split equally across the eight centres be noted.

(3) That the plans to develop an information portal to support businesses and

organisations in large local centres be noted.

6. GREATER MANCHESTER GOOD EMPLOYMENT CHARTER

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which provided information on the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter initiative (the Charter) and Stockport's performance on getting local businesses to sign up.

The Cabinet Member for Economy, Regeneration & Housing (Councillor Colin MacAlister) attended the meeting to respond to questions from the Scrutiny Committee.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:

- The Charter was a voluntary membership and assessment scheme for employers which aimed to raise employment standards across Greater Manchester (GM) for all organisations of any size, sector, or geography.
- It was reported that Stockport was 'on track' to have at least 500 Stockport businesses signed up as supporters or members by 2030.
- Of the 10 GM boroughs, Stockport was ranked third in the take up of the Charter by local businesses.
- The District Centre Managers were looking to run twilight sessions within district centres to promote take up from across the borough. Officers were also able to support local businesses with completing the relevant paperwork.
- It was asked whether employers not paying staff the living wage would be excluded from the scheme, and members were advised that, in this case, businesses could be 'supporters' but not 'members' and had a 3-year period to be compliant with membership.
- It was reported that, following the success of last year's Job Fair, a Jobs Fair was scheduled to take place on 21 October 2023 in Offerton. The fair would enable networking with businesses and the promotion of the Charter.
- It was suggested that a target be set for achieving full membership.

RESOLVED – That the work of the Economic Plan and the ambition to have at least 500 businesses engaged with the Charter as either supporters or members by 2030 be supported and endorsed.

7. UPDATE ON THE UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which provided information on progress made with the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Communities and Place funding allocation for Stockport and the awarding of grant funding to a range of projects, including next steps for the scheme. The grant awards were detailed in appendix 1.

The Cabinet Member for Economy, Regeneration & Housing (Councillor Colin MacAlister) attended the meeting to respond to questions from the Scrutiny Committee.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:

- It was noted that, although certain locations of organisations were based in one area, activities were being carried out borough wide.
- Members were encouraged to promote the fund to local organisations, as further bidding would take place.
- It was suggested that some of the remaining monies in the UKSPF pot be allocated to district centres. Members were advised that officers were reviewing the remaining funds and how to ensure that the monies were spread fairly across the borough.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

8. DRAFT STOCKPORT LOCAL PLAN

Members received a verbal update from the Cabinet Member for Economy, Regeneration & Housing (Councillor Colin MacAlister) on the Draft Stockport Local Plan. The following key points were highlighted:

- The Cabinet Member had requested officers share a copy of the draft local plan with members, which included the 85 policies endorsed by the Development Plan Working Group, as well as other documents and evidence.
- Members were advised that the plan would be best achieved through collaborative working, which included the work of the cross-party Development Plan Working Group.
- It was reported that Stockport was one of 60 councils that had had to pause work on their draft local plan whilst awaiting the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It was noted that the revised NPPF was expected to be released in the autumn.
- It was felt that the decision to pause work on the draft local plan was the right one, however, members and officers continued to monitor and review the position. The council continued to engage with the King's Counsel and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.
- It was noted that the draft local plan available to members would be a 'snapshot in time' and would change once the revised NPPF emerged.

Thanks were expressed for the comprehensive update.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

9. HERBICIDE AND PESTICIDE USE IN STOCKPORT

The Director of Place Management submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing an overview on the use of herbicides and pesticides in Stockport, highlighting environmental and health impacts, assessing viable alternative options and reductions in use whilst maintaining efficient service delivery.

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:

- The report had been requested by members of the Scrutiny Committee at their meeting held on 15 June 2023, and outlined current policy within the area.

- It was noted that certain tougher weeds required the use of glyphosate-based herbicides, and different methods were suitable in different areas. The council would not allow certain areas to be damaged by tough weeds, which would result in the cost of repairs to the council.
- The council continuously reviewed the use of these herbicides in ground maintenance operations, including reductions in their use.
- The council were keen to learn from other local authority areas in seeking best practice.
- The work of Friends of Parks and other community groups complemented the work of the council well in grounds maintenance operations, and the council were keen to hear from local groups.
- It was suggested that Lambeth London Borough Council's community weeding scheme be reviewed as an example of best practice. It was suggested that any findings be submitted to the Local Nature Recovery Group for consideration.
- The council were reliant on advice from scientists on the use of glyphosate-based herbicides, which were widely used, and accepted that an organic approach would be optimal.
- Members were pleased to see the gains the council had made in reducing the use of glyphosate-based herbicides where possible, as well as the intended ongoing work of the council.
- Members were encouraged to work with local neighbourhood teams to identify areas that could be suitable for wildflower meadows. It was suggested that signage be put in place in and around any wildflower meadow fields to help garner community support for them.

Thanks for expressed for the report and work to date.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That it be noted that Stockport Council would continue to seek ways to further reduce the amount of glyphosate currently used in the maintenance of highways, parks, greenspaces and cemeteries whilst understanding that the overall level of maintenance needs to remain at existing standards.

(3) That it be noted that the council would prioritise exploring alternative methods of weed control and their feasibility, looking for best practice across the industry and working with community volunteers wherever possible.

(4) That it be noted that the council would work with GM and partner colleagues to understand best environmental practice around pesticides and seek to minimise any detrimental effects to health or environment, and in particular, watercourses.

10. BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN AND LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY

The Director of Place Management submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing an update on the implementation of new national government legislation which mandated Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) within all new developments through the land use planning system, and the council's work to ensure nature recovery took place across the borough. Further, the Scrutiny Committee's endorsement of the

ongoing work to identify and survey locations within the council's land holdings to establish as 'habitat banks' was sought.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change & Environment (Councillor Mark Roberts) attended the meeting to respond to questions from the Scrutiny Committee.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:

- It was noted that the report had been shared with members of the Local Nature Recovery Group.
- The council were awaiting secondary legislation from government to provide the necessary detail to inform the operation of BNG. Detail of the legislation was expected in November 2023, with implementation expected in January 2024. Until the legislation was available, there remained a high degree of uncertainty around BNG implementation. It was noted that an update report would be submitted to members on the appropriate approach and mechanisms for establishing 'habitat banks', once secondary legislation was published.
- The council's aim was to establish habitat banks in each Area Committee area and encouraged members to put forward any potential site locations. It was noted that, ultimately, bank locations would be led by science.
- It was suggested that communications, calling for sites, be submitted to Area Committees.
- It was noted that other people (not council operated) could also create nature banks.
- It was also noted that Gatley Carrs Nature Reserve had been awarded the Green Flag Award for its ability to bring nature to the public.

RESOLVED – That the approach outlined in the report and ongoing work to identify and survey locations within the council's land holdings to establish as 'habitat banks' for the benefit of nature and communities be endorsed.

11. SCOPING REPORT - SCRUTINY REVIEW: THE ACCOUNTABILITY OF SOCIAL HOUSING PROVIDERS TO THE COUNCIL AND RESIDENTS OF STOCKPORT

The Director of Place Management submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which outlined the agreed scope for reviewing the accountability of social housing providers to the council and residents of Stockport.

The Chair of the Panel (Councillor Dena Ryness) provided an update on the work of the Scrutiny Review Panel to date. It was noted that the panel had met on 21 September 2023 and reviewed background information relating to the social housing providers in operation in Stockport and their governance structures, as well as the council's partnership arrangements with providers. Members of the Scrutiny Committee would be kept updated as the review progressed.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

12. 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.

It was suggested that further information as to the safety measures for Interchange Park be brought back to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee. It was noted that the design team were undertaking this piece of work and that a report would be submitted to the January meeting of the committee.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the Assistant Director for Legal and Democratic Governance be requested to make arrangements for an item to be programmed onto the agenda for the January meeting of the Scrutiny Committee in relation to safety measures for Interchange Park.

The meeting closed at 7.29 pm