

WERNETH AREA COMMITTEE

Meeting: 22 January 2024

At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

Councillor Lisa Smart (Chair) in the chair; Councillor Angie Clark (Vice-Chair); Councillors Joe Barratt, Rosemary Barratt, Mark Roberts and Sue Thorpe.

1. MINUTES

The Minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meeting held on 27 November 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair subject to the following amendments:-

- Under Agenda Item 4(i) – ‘Chairs Announcements’ – to the deletion of four references to “MK Theatre Arts” and their replacement with “NK Theatre Arts”.
- Under Agenda Item 9 – ‘Progress on Area Committee Decisions’ – to the deletion of “A report on trial speed cushions on the road between Grieve School and Pennine Road” and its replacement with “A report on trial speed cushions on Werneth Road between Greave School and Pennine Road”.

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 interest was declared:-

Personal and Prejudicial Interest

| <u>Councillor</u> | <u>Interest</u> |
|--------------------------|---|
| Mark Roberts | Plan No. DC090581 for a three storey side extension (top floor roof void), two storey and single storey rear extensions, internal re-modelling and conversion of existing loft space to habitable space with new dormers to front and rear at 4 Hill Top, Romiley, Stockport as a resident of Hill Top. |

Councillor Roberts left the meeting during the consideration of this item and took no part in the discussion or vote.

3. URGENT DECISIONS

No urgent decisions were reported.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

(i) Chair's Announcements

The Chair thanked everybody within the community for their work on Christmas events. Those included an event at Chadkirk Chapel which included entertainment from the NK Theatre Group, the Christmas lights switch on and sing along at Woodley Precinct and a Wassail event; a pagan ritual for a good apple harvest.

Members referred to the bench blessing at Woodley Precinct which had been blessed by representatives of five religions.

Finally, it was reported that a Winter Warmer event was due to take place at Woodley Civic Hall on 3 February 2024 between 1 and 4 pm.

(ii) Public Question Time

Members of the public were invited to put questions to the Chair on any matters in the powers or duties of the Area Committee, subject to the exclusions set out within the Code of Practice.

Seven public questions were submitted as follows:-

- Relating to what action was being taken to re-open Romiley Forum.
- Relating to whether Romiley Forum could be re-opened with partial Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) removal.
- Relating to whether the council would compensate local businesses impacted by the closure of Romiley Forum.
- Relating to inspections and risk assessments at Romiley Forum prior to its closure.
- Relating to the council's role as the landlord of Romiley Forum.
- Relating to gully cleansing in the local area.

The Chair stated that the Director of Place Management would provide the questioners with a written response to those questions.

- Relating to the difficulties in access for deliveries and traffic management on High Lane due to hedges and a tree stump encroaching on the highway.

In response it was stated that a member of the Highways Team would be asked to conduct a site visit at High Lane to assess access issues.

(iii) Petitions

No petitions were submitted.

(iv) Ward Flexibility Funding

There were no applications to consider.

(v) Open Forum: Local Scrutiny Review - Sewage in Rivers and Waterways - Update Report

Sue Stevenson (Head of Highways & Transportation, Stockport Council) attended the meeting to provide an update on the recommendations made to the Cabinet as part of the Local Scrutiny Review undertaken by the Werneth Area Committee between October 2022 and March 2023.

Shelina Begum, Chris Borrowdale and Mark Sewell from United Utilities attended the meeting to give a presentation and respond to Members' questions.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- Members noted that sources of water pollution included not only the water industry through sewage discharge, but also run-off and items being flushed which should not be flushed.
- United Utilities had acknowledged that sewage discharge was an issue and had committed to invest in this issue.
- Members welcomed the offer made by United Utilities to form a working group, involving local councillors, to address the issues caused by pollution in local waterways. Nonetheless, it was important to continue to engage in a public forum to ensure accountability.
- In terms of changes to sewage discharge, there had been a 39 per cent reduction regionally since 2020 with an aim for a 60 per cent reduction by 2030. United Utilities planned to invest £1.5 billion in sewage discharge reduction.
- Two significant areas in Stockport for sewage leaks were Hursthead and Otterspool. These areas were complex due to rain water inputs.
- There were no current ongoing works in the east of Stockport, but improvements outside of the borough, such as those in High Peak would positively impact the east of Stockport.
- It was noted that, from the end of 2023, each overflow was being monitored which, combined with measures of waste-water quality, gave a picture of issues related to sewage levels. The monitors did not measure variations in flow as rainfall made it difficult to measure the flow of sewage. United Utilities offered to report on overflow measures in Stockport.
- Members also requested information on the United Utilities scheme under Woodley Primary school.
- Members stated that the outflows at Hursthead still produced an unpleasant odour when it had not rained for a number of days.
- Members referred to the broken pipe at Otterspool on the Chadkirk Estate. The council had planned to plant woodland at that location but the land was later deemed unsuitable. In response United Utilities stated that external sewer flooding had been reported, with remedial repairs having taken place. Issues with sewage at that location had not occurred in isolation and were linked to a wider network of sewers. United Utilities undertook to address that issue in more detail with the working group.

- In relation to the sewage leak at Otterspool, Members stated that, although this issue had been reported a number of years earlier, it was only in the past twelve months that the leak had been addressed by United Utilities. Members suggested that United Utilities should consider revisiting other sites where sewage leaks had previously been reported.
- Members suggested that Romiley Market would be a good location for a Riverside Roadshow in order to engage with the public on key messages.
- Members requested United Utilities return to a future meeting to provide updates to its work in tackling sewage discharge in waterways as well as how complaints were being resolved.

RESOLVED – That the report and presentation be noted.

5. DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS

Development applications were submitted.

(NOTE: Full details of the decisions including conditions and reasons for granting or refusing planning permission and imposing conditions are given in the schedule of plans. The Corporate Director for Corporate & Support Services is authorised to determine conditions and reasons and they are not therefore referred to in committee minutes unless the committee makes a specific decision on a condition or reason. In order to reduce printing costs and preserve natural resources, the schedule of plans is not reproduced within these minutes. A copy of the schedule of plans is available on the council's website at www.stockport.gov.uk/planningdecisions. Copies of the schedule of plans, or any part thereof, may be obtained upon payment of the Council's reasonable charges).

A representative of the Assistant Director – Legal & Democratic Governance outlined the procedure for public speaking on planning applications.

(i) DC088870 : 9 High Lane, Woodley, Stockport, SK6 1AZ

In respect of plan number DC088870 for extensions to ground floor and raising of the roof to accommodate an additional storey at 9 High Lane, Woodley, Stockport, SK6 1AZ, it was

RESOLVED – That the Planning and Highways Regulation Committee be recommended to grant planning permission.

(ii) DC090581 : 4 Hill Top, Romiley, Stockport, SK6 4AY

In respect of plan number DC090581 for the proposed three storey side extension (top floor roof void), two storey and single storey rear extensions, internal re-modelling and conversion of existing loft space to habitable space with new dormers to front and rear at 4 Hill Top, Romiley, Stockport, SK6 4AY,

a member of the public spoke against the application; and

a representative of the applicant spoke in support of the application.

It was then

RESOLVED – That the Planning and Highways Regulation Committee be recommended to grant planning permission, with conditions.

6. PLANNING APPEAL, ENFORCEMENT APPEALS AND ENFORCEMENT NOTICES

A representative of the Assistant Director for Legal & Democratic Governance submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) listing any current planning appeals and dates for local enquiries; informal hearings for planning appeals; and enforcement action within the Werneth Area Committee.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

7. ONE STOCKPORT: ONE FUTURE UPDATE

The Director of Strategy submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing an update on the One Stockport: One Future work and seeking feedback on the proposed approach to delivering this work.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- Member welcomed the report, in particular its strategic look at the east of the borough.
- Members queried what metrics would be used to assess how safe residents feel within their communities and homes.
- In response it was stated that work would be carried out at a granular level within local communities to build a picture of neighbourhood profiles. In addition, improvements to engagement with local communities were planned.
- Members suggested that more power should be given to local communities.
- Members referred to the importance of transport networks between communities within the borough.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

8. NEIGHBOURHOODS AND PREVENTION PROGRAMME

The Director of Strategy submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) outlining the Neighbourhoods and Prevention Programme. This was an ambitious and key programme of work for the Council and Partners and was a key priority in the Council Plan, Borough Plan and One Future. It would enable better integration and collaboration in neighbourhoods across public, private, Voluntary Community Faith and Social enterprise (VCFSE) sector organisations to deliver on priorities.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- Members welcomed the neighbourhood approach outlined within the report.
- Members requested to be linked to the work of family hubs to enable them to better advise residents.
- The link between housing and health was cited, along with the role of the NHS.
- Members asked for the names of their ward Team About the Place captains.

- Members asked about how culture and green spaces impacted upon health and loneliness and how those factors could be measured. In response it was stated that the programme was at an early stage, but that metrics were being developed to profile service users.
- Life Leisure services were noted to have a positive impact in preventing people from requiring NHS Services in the future. Life Leisure should be considered less for its cost and more for the value it added to the health and wellbeing of the community.
- It was reported that primary care networks could be joined to develop relationships between local practices.
- Members commented positively on the work of Family Hubs but noted that residents were not always aware of the services which they provided. In response it was stated that Family Hubs went live in October 2023 and there had been lots of communication and engagement work.
- Members suggested that the forthcoming winter warmer event which was due to take place at Woodley Civic Hall would be an excellent opportunity to engage with local residents about Family Hubs.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

9. UPDATES RELATED TO ROMILEY FORUM

A representative of the Director of Place Management submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) updating the Area Committee on the Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) position at Romiley Forum (the theatre).

The following comments were made/ issues raised: -

- It was reported that the time frame for reopening the theatre was subject to a number of variables in terms of the required remedial work. For example, in the event that the entire roof required repair, a longer timescale was expected. Furthermore, structural engineers with expertise in RAAC were mainly being employed at schools and had limited availability to work on other buildings affected by RAAC. Another factor affecting the time frame would be the funding for the remedial works. A timeframe for decisions on what repairs would be made depended upon the funding on the package.
- Members enquired about repair work on the roof of the theatre. In response, it was stated that both NK Theatre Arts and the council in its capacity as landlord would have liked to carry out repair work on the roof of the theatre in 2017, as there was additional weight in the ceiling from solar panels and equipment storage, but did not at that point have the budget so to do.
- Work on the lower roof had been undertaken in 2017. The life span of the upper roof had expired. Recommendations had been made for both repairs and replacement. However, it was necessary to strike a balance between value for the tax-payer, opening the theatre as soon as possible, and long-term safety.
- The bulk of the work required to reopen the theatre, being structural repairs, was the responsibility of the council. In previous years the council had made some improvements to the theatre, in accordance with its policy on capital investments, although due to budget constraints it was not possible to carry out a full programme of improvements.

- In term of the council's compliance with the guidance on RAAC at the theatre, it was stated that the council had complied with the guidance and that no action could have been taken to prevent the closure of theatre upon the issue of the Department for Education guidance in August 2023.
- Following the discovery of RAAC at the theatre in 2017, a structural safety report related to RAAC had been produced 2019. Later a 2022 report had addressed the 30 year life span of RAAC. Members queried why, in those circumstances, no action had been taken by the council related to RAAC at the theatre prior to 2023. In response, it was stated that, at all times, the appropriate guidance had been followed.
- Members asked about the differences in treating RAAC at the theatre compared to treating RAAC at other council owned buildings. In response, it was stated that the council was the sole occupier and owner of schools and libraries affected by RAAC whereas the theatre was a tenanted building where the council acted as the landlord.
- In terms of the council's role as landlord for the theatre, the contractual arrangements were described and it was confirmed that the council could extend the tenancy of NK Theatre Arts.
- Talks were ongoing between the council and NK Theatre Arts about the group's costs due to the closure of the theatre. The Assistant Director for Estates and Asset Management undertook to make efforts to reach an agreement with NK Theatre and to provide an update to the Area Committee.
- Members enquired as to whether NK Theatre Arts could reopen the theatre. In response, as tenants, NK Theatre had the option to reopen the theatre.
- It was reported that the search for an alternative venue for NK Theatre Arts within the council's estate had found no suitable alternatives. The construction of a temporary space would be costly and that money might be better spent on the repairs to the theatre.
- Members encouraged the council to work closely with NK Theatre Arts in relation to the reopening of the theatre.
- In terms of support for local businesses in Romiley which had faced reduced footfall as a result of the theatre's closure, it was stated that, whilst supporting businesses in Romiley was part of the council's wider responsibility, it was outwith the remit of the council in its capacity as landlord of the theatre.
- Members suggested that the council's Town Manager could consider additional events within Romiley in order to increase foot traffic for businesses affected by the closure of the theatre.
- Members stated that the council fully supported reopening the theatre as soon as possible, and had written to the Secretary of State to request a funding package similar to that which had been given to schools where RAAC had been discovered.
- Members commented on the difference in the approach by Central Government to repairs for schools and other buildings where RAAC had been found. Members commented that more could be done by Central Government to address the closure of buildings due to RAAC, other than schools. One example of the difference in approach was that planning rules had been suspended for schools with RAAC, leading to repairs being carried out more quickly. This suspension of planning rules did not apply to theatres.
- Members requested the Cabinet to be open minded in committing funding the reopening of Romiley Forum through means such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and other government grants. It also recommended that the council should continue to seek further funding from Central Government.

- Members expressed concern that the theatre, as an important cultural institution within the borough, had been closed during Stockport's year as Town of Culture.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the Cabinet be recommended to consider any and all funding measures to ensure that Romiley Forum could reopen as soon as possible, including the potential use of underspends in the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

10. WARD DISCRETIONARY BUDGET- BREDBURY RECREATION GROUND PAVILION

A representative of the Assistant Director – Legal & Democratic Governance submitted a report on behalf of the Director of Place Management (copies of which had been circulated) setting out a proposal for a feasibility study to assess the viability of reopening Bredbury Recreation Ground Pavilion for community use. The report also sought the allocation of £2,000 from the Ward Discretionary Budget to fund the feasibility study.

RESOLVED – That the Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources be requested to approve the allocation of £2000 from the Ward Discretionary Budget (Bredbury and Woodley ward allocation) to fund the feasibility study to assess the viability of reopening Bredbury Recreation Ground Pavilion for community use.

11. WARD DISCRETIONARY BUDGET - WOODLEY PRECINCT SHUTTER ART

A representative of the Assistant Director – Legal & Democratic Services submitted a report of the Director of Place Management submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) setting out proposals for the use of the Ward Discretionary Budget to facilitate the completion of a project to carry out shutter artwork at Woodley Precinct.

RESOLVED – That the Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources be requested to approve the use of £4,000 from the Ward Discretionary Fund (Bredbury and Woodley ward allocation) toward the costs of the shutter artwork project.

12. PARKS EVENT APPLICATION - WOODBANK MEMORIAL PARK TRAIL RACE EVENT

A representative of the Assistant Director – Legal & Democratic Governance submitted a report of the Director of Place Management (copies of which had been circulated) detailing an application from Fairway Primary School PTA to hold the Woodbank Memorial Park Trail Race Event on Sunday, 3 November 2024 between 10 am and 1 pm. The race route included Daisy Field which was in the Bredbury & Woodley Ward.

RESOLVED – That approval be given to an application received from Fairway Primary School PTA to utilise Woodbank Memorial Park as part of The Fairway 5 Trail Race on Sunday, 3 November 2024 between 10 am and 1 pm, subject to all appropriate paperwork and licences being obtained and submitted to the Council at least one week prior to the event taking place.

13. PROGRESS ON AREA COMMITTEE DECISIONS

A representative of the Assistant Director for Legal & Democratic Governance submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) updating the Area Committee on progress since the last meeting on decisions taken by the Area Committee and detailing the current position on area flexibility funding. The report also included the current position on the highway and traffic management delegated budget.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 9.29 pm