

COMMUNITIES & TRANSPORT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting: 26 February 2024

At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

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

1. MINUTES

The Minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meeting held on 15 January 2024 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.

No declarations of interest were made.

3. CALL-IN

There were no call-in items to consider.

4. ONE STOCKPORT COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

Michael Cullen (Deputy Chief Executive) and Chief Superintendent John Webster (Greater Manchester Police) attended the meeting and made a presentation focussing on the activity of the One Stockport Safety Partnership (OSSP) since this Committee approved the partnership's 2022-2025 Plan in March 2022.

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:-

- The District Commander gave details related to the Child-Centred Custody Pilot, aiming for better working practices and a child-centred framework. The pilot also aimed to ensure that every child arrested would be discussed in detail with partnership organisations. The measures for improved working practices would be multi-faceted. Quantitative measures such as the time taken for the investigative process and time spent in custody would be taken into account. Other measures were more qualitative.
- The District Commander invited Members of the Committee to observe the work of the police when children were arrested.
- Members welcomed the revised approach to children in custody, which was considered to be humane, in particular describing children in custody as being vulnerable.

- In terms of police engagement in community activities with children, it was stated that, whilst the police took up opportunities to engage with the local community, they did not take the lead on such engagement as that was not the core role of the police.
- The police were involved with outreach programs aimed at preventing anti-social behaviour. They supported and facilitated the work of statutory and non-statutory partners in this work and had some significant successes. The police also had two dedicated schools officers who worked with troubled young people.
- It was also reported that the Youth Justice Board and Youth Offending Teams worked with young people through means including community safety and partnerships such as football clubs. This work had helped to change the lives of young people.
- The work of the Police Restorative Justice Officer involved looking at outcomes for young people. Whilst in some circumstances, depending on the level of offending, a prosecution was inevitable, opportunities for an alternative path were sought.
- County lines crime, where criminals – often drug dealers – took advantage of vulnerable individuals, often children, to force them into criminal activity. This was a nationwide issue, although not an especially significant issue for Stockport. Nonetheless, work was ongoing in Stockport to abate that type of offending.
- There were some circumstances where individuals under arrest, particularly children, were treated as victims themselves, and where legislation related to duress and the Slavery Act were applied.
- Members commented positively on community engagement with the neighbourhood police inspectors, citing a recent, well-attended, Police and Communities Together (PACT) meeting in Werneth.
- Neighbourhood policing and communications with local people were key to developing effective relationships between the police and the community.
- It was noted that the neighbourhood police had been proactive in terms of social media updates, particularly related to town centre arrests. The police took the view that understanding the experiences of the community was vital and it wanted the town centre to be a place for people to thrive.
- Members commented that the police still had some work to do to provide assurances to residents that they would attend burglaries. In response it was acknowledged that Greater Manchester Police's historical position that it could not investigate all crime had been damaging. It was reported that 100 per cent of reported crime was now investigated. In Stockport burglaries were down by 35 per cent in the past two years. Residents were encouraged to contact the police in the event of burglaries.
- In terms of crime rates, serious offending had significantly reduced and Stockport was regarded as a safe place to live.
- The Right Care, Right Person initiative tackled the work carried out by the police on a daily basis which did not involve crime, for example, dealing with people in crisis. Those people required the right sources of care and support; police stations were not necessarily the right place.
- The initiative was designed to ensure that the caller was directed to the correct person. This was a nationwide project and it was hoped that the outcome would allow the police service to return to core policing principles. The initiative was likely to come into effect in April 2024.
- The methodology of triaging people in crisis was named 'Thrive' and involved an assessment of threat and risk under several scenarios.
- It was reported that domestic violence was a pernicious issue across the country. An investigative team had been set up in Stockport to deal with domestic abuse offenders

and to ensure that the victims of domestic abuse received the best support and had the opportunity to break the cycle of abuse.

- Stockport Council was a white-ribbon accredited organisation, committed to ending violence against women and girls, with a number of supporters and allies across the council.
- The Store Net system had been used effectively at the Peel Centre to tackle shoplifting. Overall there had been a 50 per cent increase in shoplifting. The District Commander commented that big businesses could do more to tackle shoplifting. The police were particularly concerned about staff potentially getting into violent situations by tackling shoplifters. Businesses were advised to contact neighbourhood police to seek advice on what strategies they can employ to help themselves, including a toolkit for small businesses.
- Members referred to a radio system set up between local business in Woodley Precinct to tackle business crime, which had been based upon a similar system on Castle Street in Edgeley. This had proved to be a successful and proactive approach, particularly for small businesses with fewer resources.
- It was reported that the police's data system was now more effective than it had been previously, however this led to some difficulties in extrapolating data in order to demonstrate trends in crime and the efficacy of police strategies. The data was under review and would be shared at future meetings of this Committee.
- The Safer Streets initiative was a specific project which had taken place in Brinnington. The work undertaken included funding for CCTV and a control centre, business support work and youth work.
- Members were encouraged to report residents' concerns about speeding on roads to neighbourhood inspectors. Police Officers with speed guns were a visible and effective deterrent.
- Members referred to a pilot which had taken place in Crewe to tackle illegal parking and asked whether a similar initiative was planned for Stockport. In response it was stated that it would be considered by the police and that residents were encouraged to provide intelligence to the police on illegal parking to ensure that vulnerable people were not forced onto the road.
- Members thanked the District Commander for his time and for a very useful and informative discussion.

RESOLVED – That the presentation be noted.

5. ANTI-POVERTY OBJECTIVES 2024-2027

The Director of Public Health submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) setting out the revised set of Anti-Poverty objectives for approval, prior to being taken to Cabinet.

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 whether the council's Welfare Rights officers were engaged in the anti-poverty strategy. In response it was reported that frontline staff working with vulnerable

residents were poverty aware and they helped to deliver information and advice on welfare rights to residents. It was reported that poverty was a growing issue.

- The council's strategy with regard to stable housing was welcomed as the effects upon children who did not have stable accommodation could be lifelong. Members commented that the council's strategy on accommodation could go further and be more ambitious.
- It was reported that, as the council moved forward with its Local Plan, more progress on housing was expected and the council would give consideration to the numbers of social and affordable homes it could build. The anti-poverty strategy and housing policies were now linked.
- Members queried the potential effect of the loss of the Housing Support Fund, along with other forms of government funding, upon Stockport's resources for housing within the borough. In response it was stated that the assumed budget from the Housing Support Fund in 2024-25 was £0 and that there had been no update from the Department for Work and Pensions on the likely impact on anti-poverty objectives.
- Members requested that childcare provision be included within the anti-poverty objectives.
- It was reported that data-gathering related to anti-poverty objectives would be undertaken by way of the development of neighbourhood profiles to enable information to be collated within geographical areas with small pockets of deprivation. Those indicators would be built into the borough outcome framework.
- The Family Hub service aimed to deliver a team approach and joined-up service in order to support Stockport's residents. The objective was to listen to the lived experience of families and residents in poverty.
- In terms of helping schools to tackle poverty, Members were advised that it would benefit schools to undergo a poverty proofing process. This process was currently being rolled out across Stockport's primary schools and it was aimed to continue the programme for secondary schools. Furthermore, schools were advised to give consideration to the cost of uniform and ensure that it was designed to be affordable for all. Schools were also advised to give consideration to food poverty and the provision of breakfast clubs.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

6. TOWN OF CULTURE UPDATE FEBRUARY 2024

A representative of the Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing an interim update on the delivery of the Stockport Town of Culture programme prior to full evaluation being carried out.

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 welcomed the report, along with the work which had taken place for the Town of Culture year. Members noted that footfall in the town centre had increased by 73 per cent.

- A full evaluation of the overall economic impact, both quantitative and qualitative, from the Town of Culture was planned for March 2024, when the Town of Culture year was due to come to a conclusion.
- In terms of legacy, Town of Culture year had given the council the opportunity to build contacts with 150 organisations and it would continue to collaborate with those organisations on future projects.
- Members asked about learning in terms of the provision of libraries and museums across the borough. In response it was stated that engaging with residents was a legacy of the Town of Culture approach to cultural provision, along with building relationships and engaging with the public to get more people visiting Stockport's libraries and museums.
- The council intended to engage with the next Town of Culture and share its learning.
- The Stockport Town of Culture weekend event was planned take place on 23 and 24 March 2024 throughout Stockport, involving movement, music, heritage and the arts. All events would be free of charge and bookable, including free entry to the borough's museums. A range of activities was planned for the newly opened Interchange Park and performances would take place at Merseyway and the market, along with guided walks giving details of Stockport's history. The programme for the weekend of events was due be published shortly.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

7. TRANSPORTATION CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2024-25

The Director of Place Management submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing details of the proposed transportation capital programme for 2024/25 and where possible an indicative programme for future years.

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

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- Urban Traffic Control Schemes were described as a set of traffic signals for use by pedestrians.
- Members requested that consideration be given to coordinating pothole repairs with utility works on roads.
- It was reported that the recent central government announcement of £2.5 billion for new infrastructure schemes was for smaller urban areas and not for the Greater Manchester area. The settlement figure for Greater Manchester was not yet known.
- Opportunities were being sought for areas in which to implement the proposed 20mph zone scheme and Members were invited to make suggestions. Roads with long-distance cycle routes were being given priority for 20 mph zones.
- Members commented that it would be useful to consider implementing 20mph zones into schemes for road safety around schools. In response it was stated that road safety around schools was funded by a capital programme which had the capacity to implement schemes for two or three schools across the borough per year. The inclusion of 20mph zones would have the effect of reducing the number of road safety around school schemes that the council was able to create.

- Members requested that consideration be given to improvements to faded yellow-line markings, which could not be enforced, to be undertaken as a batch scheme across the borough.
- Members requested that significant roadworks schemes, particularly those affecting the town centre, be considered by a future meeting of this Committee.
- Members requested a report on the National Pothole Scheme be brought to a future meeting of this Committee.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the Cabinet Member for Parks, Highways & Transport Services' approval of the programme be supported in line with the Council Budget.

8. SOUTHERN GATEWAY HUB

The Director of Place Management submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) setting out the ongoing programme of activity to secure Stockport as the Southern Gateway Hub for Greater Manchester, including:

- The Next Stop Stockport programme to bring Metrolink to the town centre.
- The business case development to redevelop Stockport railway station to modernise its offer to passengers and increase capacity capabilities.

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:-

- The council's ambition was to bring the Metrolink to Stockport within the next ten years with the phase one link being that from Didsbury to Stockport Town Centre and ambitions for further links between Reddish, Ashton and Manchester Airport.
- Stanley Green had been identified by the council as a possible site for a railway station. Some funding was in place for the creation of that station, but further funds were required from Greater Manchester. The process of creating a railway station was reported to be slow and complex.
- A fully funded scheme of road improvements on the A34 in Stockport was in place and a report on that scheme would be presented to a future meeting of this Committee.
- Members requested that consideration be given to the creation of a tram/train network around Cheadle.
- Members requested that consideration be given to travel across the borough, alongside access to Manchester city centre and Manchester Airport.
- In response it was stated that the report aimed to demonstrate the significance of Stockport town centre within the national rail network and its links to suburban rail, tram and bus networks. It also aimed to demonstrate that Stockport had a thriving town centre. Further work with Network Rail and other railway partners would be undertaken in the coming months to create a holistic approach to travel across the borough.
- It was further reported that the project would include consideration of the Stockport to Stalybridge train route.

- There had been no recent update from central government on the 'Restore your Railways' scheme.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

9. STREETWORKS (GM ROAD ACTIVITY PERMIT SCHEME) REPORT

The Director of Place Management submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing provides details on the Greater Manchester Road Activity Permit Scheme (GMRAPS) which commenced on the 29 April 2013 to provide a way to better manage and reduce the disruption caused by roadworks across Greater Manchester.

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:-

- The report stated that the Permit Scheme enabled local authorities to issue Fixed Penalty Notices or fines where appropriate when utility contractors did not adhere to the agreed permit conditions/dates and times. Members asked whether the council was permitted to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice or fine where a utility company had created 'street scarring' (where roads were not repaired with like for like materials).
- Members asked whether the council checked that like-for-like repairs were being made, how many Fixed Penalty Notices or fines for street-scarring were issued per year. Members also asked whether the funds from Fixed Penalty Notices or fines were sufficient to allow the council to remedy street-scarring and whether there was a route for residents to report street-scarring.
- In response it was reported that the council took a robust approach to utility companies to ensure that they adhered to agreements such as timescales and traffic management. Members were encouraged to report street-scarring to officers. It was further reported that the limits for Fixed Penalty Notices and fines were set by central government and that they were low. The council tested repairs made by utility companies and it held surplus stock to enable like for like repairs.
- Members requested that this report be circulated to all Members of the council.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

10. 20MPH SPEED LIMITS

The Director of Place Management submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing an update on a revised approach for implementing 20mph speed limits across the borough.

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:-

- It was clarified that the 20mph zone study took place in Reddish North.

- It was reported that residents were not consulted as part of this study, although statistical data was used to consider the outcomes of the scheme. Larger schemes would include a consultation.
- Members commented that there might be a benefit in speaking to residents in order to assess local perceptions related to safety and pollution.
- Members welcomed this proposal and the opportunity it presented to make roads safer for residents.
- The costs of creating a 20mph zone under this scheme would be in the hundreds or low thousands of pounds, compared to previous schemes which were thousands of pounds as a result of the costs of physical traffic calming measures.
- It was reported that efforts were being made to secure Greater Manchester funding to create further road safety measures.
- Members commented that the scheme created a useful framework for the threshold of creating 20mph zones.
- The reduction in speed created by 20mph zones, with no traffic calming measures, was reported to be a few miles per hour with each incremental improvement resulting in a road safety benefit.
- It was important not to over-saturate roads with 20mph zones as it could result in drivers disregarding the signs.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

11. 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.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 9.08 pm