

ECONOMY, REGENERATION & CLIMATE CHANGE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting: 13 June 2024
At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

Councillor Claire Vibert (Chair) in the chair; Councillor James Frizzell (Vice-Chair); Councillors Jake Austin, Ian Hunter, Micheala Meikle, David Meller, Ian Powney, Dena Ryness and Alex Wynne.

1. MINUTES

The minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meeting held on 29 February 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 they had in any of the items on the agenda for the meeting.

The following interest was declared:

Personal and prejudicial interest

Councillor

Interest

David Meller	Agenda item 10 'Stockport Mayoral Development Corporation (MDC) Draft Strategic Business Plan 2024-2029' as a board member of Stockport MDC and a member of Cheadle Towns Fund Board. (A dispensation had been granted (until September 2026) to enable Councillor Meller to take part in consideration of business relating to Cheadle Towns Fund Board).
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Personal interests

Officer

Interest

Paul Richards	Agenda item 10 'Stockport Mayoral Development Corporation Draft Strategic Business Plan 2024-2029' as Chief Executive of Stockport MDC.
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Mark Glynn

Agenda items 5 'Portfolio Performance and Resources Year-End Reports 2023/24', 6 'Portfolio Performance and Resources – Draft Portfolio Agreements 2024/25' and 7 'Climate Action Now Annual Report 2023/24' as Chair of Totally Local Company (TLC) and a member of the board of Life Leisure. TLC and Life Leisure were referenced within the reports.

3. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PUBLIC INTEREST TEST

RESOLVED – That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of agenda item 10 ‘Stockport Mayoral Development Corporation Draft Strategic Business Plan 2024-2029’ if required.

4. CALL-IN

There were no call-in items to consider.

5. PORTFOLIO PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES YEAR-END REPORTS 2023/24

The Director of Place Management and Director of Development & Regeneration submitted a joint report (copies of which had been circulated) presenting the Year-End Portfolio Performance and Resource Reports (PPRRs) for the Climate Change & Environment and Economy, Regeneration & Housing Portfolios.

The Year-End PPRRs focused on delivery of the portfolio priorities from October 2023 to March 2024 and included forecast performance and financial data (where this was available) for the portfolio, along with an update on the portfolio savings programme.

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

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

- The Cabinet Member was proud of the work that had been achieved but recognised that there was more work to be done.
- It was noted that resilience had been improved within the Waste Team. Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) had been recognised by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs as the local authority with the best recycling rates in the North West owing to the efforts of residents and council staff.
- **Priority 1: Mainstreaming CAN**
 - a) It was recognised that, although green house gas accountancy was improving, gathering data on a reduction in emissions proved difficult and trends were not easy to determine. Data from the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research confirmed the need for work to progress quicker to reduce emissions. Emissions data was anticipated to present an upwards trajectory owing to a readjustment period post covid-19 pandemic.
 - b) The council continued to engage with residents to support the reduction in borough-wide emissions e.g., promoting ECO Flex and ECO Flex 4 schemes which enabled homeowners to retrofit their homes. An issue remained with the private-rented sector, which required intervention from government. Members were encouraged to advise residents about the [Your Home Better](#) service that could help residents improve the energy efficiency of their homes.
- **Priority 3: Council CAN engagement activity**
 - a) CCE 3.2: Number of people undertaking Carbon Literacy training for businesses - the target was a stretch target. Members were advised that Carbon Literacy was a

developing field and the council worked closely with the green business forum to encourage businesses to undergo carbon literacy accreditation. It was reported that Stockport company Robinsons Brewery had been carbon literate accredited.

- b) CCE 3.3(a): Number of schools/colleges taking part in the Schools Climate Assembly – it was noted that there were challenges for schools in facilitating extra-curricular work; the team would take up members' offer to promote the Schools Climate Assembly within their wards. The target was a stretch target and work was largely beyond the council's control. However, it was important that the council continued to apply pressure to schools and recognised that a minimal approach with certain elements of the work delivered could be more appropriate for some schools. It was reported that the Schools Climate Assembly idea was being mimicked across other local authorities in the United Kingdom.
- c) It was reported that there was a requirement on schools to appoint a Climate Action Lead by 2025.
- d) The young people with the winning ideas from the Schools Climate Assembly 2024 were expected to attend the Council Meeting in July to present their ideas as to how to tackle climate change.

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

- It was reported that the Stockport MDC Team had been awarded 'Small Team of the Year' in the national Local Government Chronicle awards. The Scrutiny Committee asked that congratulations be passed on to the team.
- Despite the exciting work that had recently taken place in the borough e.g., the opening on the interchange and new park, significant challenges remained. Thanks were expressed to staff for their work in supporting the unprecedented number of families presenting as homeless.
- **Priority 1: Delivering ambitious housing projects**
 - a) ERH 1.2: Additional Homes Provided – it was suggested that this measure be reviewed to consider a rolling figure over a number of years.
 - b) It was asked that the portfolio dashboard be circulated to members for their information.
- **Priority 2: Managing and maintaining housing stock and tackling homelessness**

It was noted that the council were taking a number of actions to tackle homelessness which included but was not limited to, purchasing accommodation and supporting prevention and early intervention. Alternative solutions to the use of temporary accommodation were continuously sought by the team.
- **Priority 4: Supporting the business base in Stockport**

It was suggested that the data provided for vacant properties be split into two sets of figures - office and retail respectively. The team would enquire with the local data company about the data presentation.
- **Priority 5: Improving access to work for all and working to ensure our workforce have the skills that employers need**

ERH 5.5: Total number of Stockport employers signed up to the GM Good Employment Charter - the council continued to strongly encourage businesses to join the charter as a key element of the council's economic plan. It was advised that companies operating the real living wage experienced staff retention and less staff sickness, and that advocacy from business encouraged others to sign up. Members offered to help spread the word locally.

RESOLVED – That the reports be noted.

6. PORTFOLIO PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES - DRAFT PORTFOLIO AGREEMENTS 2024/25

The Director of Place Management and Director of Development & Regeneration submitted a joint report (copies of which had been circulated) detailing the draft 2024/25 Agreements for the Climate Change & Environment and Economy, Regeneration & Housing portfolios.

The Cabinet Members for Climate Change & Environment (Councillor Mark Roberts) and Economy, Regeneration & Housing (Councillor Colin MacAlister) responded to questions from the Scrutiny Committee.

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

- It was noted that approximately 15% of the council's workforce had completed Carbon Literacy training. Members were curious as to the long-term impact the training had e.g., on decision-making at the council by officers and members, and children in schools. Although difficult to measure, the impact could be seen through the excellent quality of the debate by young people at the Schools Climate Assembly. Further, all officers in the council's Planning Team had undergone Carbon Literacy training; these officers would have an important opportunity to tackle climate change in their work on the draft Local Plan.
- It was important that the council acted as civic leader on climate action and convince others that more work was to be done. Further, to take residents on the journey with the council to leading greener lives.
- It was noted that the byproduct from residual waste produced chemicals needed to clean water; this had been described as 'green energy' within the report in error.
- Members were encouraged to undertake Carbon Literacy training, which could be split into smaller sessions to enable training to be undertaken alongside work and other commitments. The training could not be made mandatory for members.
- The district heat network project was incredibly exciting and could be a fantastic opportunity for the borough.

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

- It was advised that the red RAG rating relating to planning breaches was positive as it demonstrated the capture of breaches; more breaches were being resolved than ever before.
- Higher targets had been set for some of the planning measures to reflect the more ambitious national expectation of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023.
- It was queried whether the empty property strategy linked into the work to tackle homelessness, and it was noted that an update report on homelessness and housing need would be brought to the autumn meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

7. CLIMATE ACTION NOW ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

The Director of Place Management submitted the Climate Action Now Annual Report for 2023/24 (copies of which had been circulated), which outlined progress made by the council in implementing the Climate Action Now (CAN) programme over the last financial year 2023/24.

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

The following comments were made/issues raised:

- The CAN team had been nominated for two awards, which demonstrated the good work happening in Stockport.
- It was queried whether a discussion needed to be had around carbon neutrality targets given that national government and local authorities appeared to be falling behind on targets. It was felt that targets should be ambitious, but not so unrealistic that people lose hope that they feel they are unable to effect change.
- Members were encouraged to use Delegated Ward Budgets for street trees.
- The team were confident that the government would look favourably on the district heat network bid and, if successful, work would accelerate considerably.
- Information as to how schools were selected for the Solar for Schools Programme (including where the schools were located) would be sought and circulated to members via email.
- It was reported that the CAN Seed Fund was not just about carbon reduction, but also education and community engagement; the application process for the fund was now open.

Thanks were expressed to the team for their work to date.

RESOLVED – (1) That the progress achieved since the CAN Annual Report issued in July 2023 be noted and the need for much greater decreases in greenhouse gas emissions, both for the council operationally and the borough as a whole, be recognised. It was recognised that, although much progress had been made, significantly more action was required to meet both the council's 2030 operational net zero target and the borough's carbon budget set by the Greater Manchester wide 2038 carbon neutrality target; and

(2) That the publication of a modified version of the report on the council's website be endorsed.

8. SCRUTINY REVIEW TOPIC SELECTION 2024/25

A representative of the Assistant Director for Legal & Democratic Governance submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) outlining the scrutiny review process and providing a framework within which they should be undertaken to support members with the selection of scrutiny review topics for the 2024/25 municipal year.

In addition to the continuation of last year's review, members suggested a further review be undertaken relating to district centres from a more strategic perspective. It was

suggested that the two previous reviews undertaken relating to district centres be assessed to ensure no repetition in scope; members would confirm the topic selection via email in due course.

RESOLVED – (1) That the review ‘The Accountability of Social Housing Providers to the Council and Residents of Stockport’ be continued for the 2024/25 municipal year, and that the following members be appointed to the Scrutiny Review Panel:

Councillors Dena Ryness (Chair), David Meller, Claire Vibert and Ian Powney.

(2) That a further review relating to district centres be undertaken for the 2024/25 municipal year (detail to be confirmed), and that the following members be appointed to the Scrutiny Review Panel:

Councillors James Frizzell (Chair), Ian Hunter, Jake Austin, Michaela Mickle and Dena Ryness.

9. WORK PROGRAMME

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

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

10. STOCKPORT MAYORAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION DRAFT STRATEGIC BUSINESS PLAN 2024-2029

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which sought Cabinet approval for the Mayoral Development Corporation Draft Strategic Business Plan 2024-2029 at appendix A.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.10 pm