

STOCKPORT LOCAL ACCESS FORUM (OUTSIDE BODY)

Meeting: 11 March 2024

At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

David Gosling (Chair) in the chair; Debbi Hall (Vice-Chair); Jonathan Broad, Kathy England, Edgar Ernstbrunner, Liz Morgan and Grace Baynham.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Ian Tate, Phil Featherstone, and Chris Walsh.

2. MINUTES

The minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meeting held on 14 November 2023 were approved as a correct record subject to the following amendments: -

- Under Item 4(i) – Matters Arising – to the deletion of reference to ‘Riverdale Farm’ and its replacement with ‘Lowerdale Equestrian Centre’.
- Under Item 9 – Recent Activity Update - to the deletion of reference to ‘Riverdale Farm’ and its replacement with ‘Lowerdale Equestrian Centre’.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members of the Forum were invited to declare any interest they had in any of the items on the agenda for the meeting.

No declarations were made.

4. MATTERS ARISING

- A representative of the Assistant Director for Legal & Democratic Governance gave an update on the Local Access Forum Annual Report for 2024.
- Members commented that since the previous meeting there had been a landslide into the River Goyt at the bottom of Lowerdale Farm Equestrian Centre and that people were still trying to access it despite clearly being signposted. In response, the Forum were advised by the Strategy Growth and Improvement Manager that this was now a matter which the council were in touch with the Environment Agency about.

5. RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN ACTION PLAN REVIEW

A report was submitted by the Strategy, Growth and Improvement Manager, informing the Local Access Forum of the progress made in the delivery of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan statement of action and requested comments from members of the

Forum on a proposed revised statement of action to be used up until the formal review is complete in 2028.

The following comments were made/issued raised:-

- Members enquired as to whether the National Highways and Transport Questionnaire is publicly available. In response, members of the Forum were advised that it the Questionnaire was not currently publicly available and this is something that would have to be organised.
- Members enquired as to how many respondents there were to the National Highways and Transport Questionnaire in Stockport. In response, members of the Forum were advised that it was a statistically significant number for each local authority and that enough responses were provided that there was confidence that the survey provided an accurate borough-wide representation of views.
- Members requested that a report come to a future meeting detailing the outcomes of the National Highways and Transport Questionnaire.
- Members enquired as to whether reviewing reactive maintenance policies for public rights of way in the Transport Asset Management Strategy Framework meant that, for example, frequency monitoring would be less than the current policy. In response, members were advised that the only reduction in service which had been proposed was that some field paths may only receive an inspection every other year, but no decision had yet been made. However, this would not stop inspections being made if issues were raised.
- Members enquired as to whether, per Appendix 1, Conclusion 1, of the report, the council was behind in its understanding of how the Path network is used. In response, members were advised that Conclusion 1 was indicative of the changing group of people who have different desires for their network, such as wheelchair users or people of a minority ethnic background.
- Members enquired as to whether the Annual Walking and Cycling Update Report, as mentioned in Appendix 1.1, included equestrians. In response, members were advised that that specific report only includes walkers and cyclists as that was what was requested by the Council.
- Members commented that the RoWIP and other reports should include all users, including equestrians, and not single out specific groups such as cyclists and walkers.
- Members noted that progress on route status clarification, per Appendix 1.3, was not as far along as the Forum would like.
- Members enquired as to whether Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) could be looked at more urgently, with some protocol being devised for this. In response, members were advised that this had recently been raised with Legal Services.
- Members enquired as to whether a flow chart on decision making of how Definitive Map Modification Orders are processed would soon be available. In response, members of the Forum were advised that Legal Services would be contacted requesting this.
- Members requested a list detailing the meaning of the acronyms contained within the report.
- Members enquired as to whether appendix 1.4 of the report referenced the process at which point it was decided whether something is revenue or a capital project. In response, members of the Forum were advised that the Asset Management Plan

was used to assess the condition of assets, such as how old they are, or how fast they degrade, which was information which had collected to help with the forward plan, although many assets were further ahead in this process than public rights of way.

- Members enquired as to the transparency of what is considered revenue spending and what is considered a capital project, and whether the Rights of Way Improvement Plan will include the council's rationale for determining capital projects, and whether there is equality across the network in determining this. In response, members were advised that this was determined by whether a repair or a significant upgrade was being carried out, with a significant upgrade to an asset being considered a capital project.
- Members noted that officers would like to improve reporting of issues on public rights of way by introducing an online reporting mechanism, per Appendix 2.1 of the report, and urged officers to meet the commitment to do so.
- Members commented that whilst an online reporting mechanism would be welcomed, it is equally important that issues raised are resolved.
- Members noted that, per Appendix 2.4 of the report, council resources were not best spent on provided travel information to users of its venues due to technological advancement changing how users navigate to destinations. However, it was commented that more could be done on identifying walks in the borough, particularly all-weather walks.
- Members requested that where the term "definitive map" has been used, the term "and statement" is added.
- The Chair commented that the survey being undertaken of all footpaths in the urban area is welcoming suggestions from members of the Forum.
- Members commented that not all surfaces are surfaced to the correct standard, with the continued use of tarmac on routes due to its impact on the environment and flooding, as this can turn it into a National Speed Limit road.
- Members commented that unnecessary barriers on footpaths between urban areas present a burden to many users who use the paths to save time on a journey, which may encourage them to use cars, increasing congestion.
- Members noted that there was continued concern within the Forum regarding the implementation of the access policy.
- Members noted the systematic financial pressure which local government have been under for the past 13 years.
- Members commented that some language used in the report was vague.

6. FORWARD PLAN

Members and officers were invited to suggest agenda items for future meetings of the Forum.

The following agenda items were proposed:

- Discussion on training for the Forum members, including site visits and guest speakers.
- Continued discussion on the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.
- A report on National Highways and Transport Questionnaire.

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The meeting closed at 7.35 pm