

COMMUNITIES & TRANSPORT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting: 2 September 2024

At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

Councillor Joe Barratt (Chair) in the chair; Councillor Matt Wynne (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Jon Byrne, Angie Clark, Steve Gribbon, Dominic Hardwick, Dan Oliver,
Rachel Wise, Jake Austin and Graham Greenhalgh.

1. MINUTES

The Minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meeting held on 10 June 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.

The following interests were declared:-

Personal Interests

<u>Councillor</u>	<u>Interest</u>
Jon Byrne	Agenda Item 8 – ‘City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements – A6 Corridor Improving Journeys’ as a member of Walk Ride Stockport which submitted a response to the consultation.
Dominic Hardwick	Agenda Item 4 – ‘Stockport’s Community Faith and Social Enterprise (VCSFE) Sector Strategy Progress’ as an attendee of Stockport Armed Forces Community Organisation (SAFCO) meetings and an attendee at the Norbury Church, also known as St Thomas Church, Hazel Grove.

<u>Officer</u>	<u>Interest</u>
Mark Glynn	Agenda Item 6 – ‘Gritting and the Provision of Grit Bins in Stockport’ as Chair of the Board of Totally Local Company.

3. CALL-IN

There were no call-in items to consider.

4. STOCKPORT'S VOLUNTARY COMMUNITY FAITH AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISE (VCFSE) SECTOR STRATEGY PROGRESS

A representative of the Executive Director for Corporate and Support Services submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) updating members on the impact of work undertaken to achieve the ambitions set out in our Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) Sector Strategy, in the 12 months from April 2023 to March 2024.

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 purpose of Equity Networks was to gain an understanding of equality issues which intersect across more than one area of work. The networks also provided an opportunity for different networks to work together. Officers had been assigned to work with Equity Networks in order to share learning and to support and facilitate relationships.
- The Neighbourhoods and Prevention Programme had tailored its equality provision depending on the community, for example some areas had concentrated provision on financial inclusion in response to poverty in those areas.
- A review of the race equality framework would be undertaken in light of the events of the summer. It was an opportunity to consider community cohesion.
- In relation to those incidents which had taken place over the summer, there was a need to ensure that the community felt safe. Members requested an update on the Community Cohesion Group would be brought to a future meeting of this Scrutiny Committee with a focus on actions and governance arrangements.
- Team Around the Place (TAP) Captains were aligned with neighbourhoods to provide a familiar face to service users and focus on local priorities. They also provided the council with intelligence and insight in order to inform service design.
- An update on the Neighbourhood and Prevention service would be brought to forthcoming area committee meetings, followed by drop-in sessions for councillors.
- TAP Captains belonged to other organisations within the borough such as Pure Innovation, the NHS and Stockport Homes.
- Household Support Grants had been extended; a request for an update on the longer term position of those grants was requested.
- The Match My Project scheme was progressing well and plans were being developed to create more opportunities for collaboration with local businesses.
- The Greater Manchester Standing Together Grant was an annual grant, although its continuation would be reviewed.
- Members suggested that there might be scope for some of the networks, for example the Equality Network to work with schools; officers welcomed that suggestion and agreed to take it forward. It was also reported that in the past 12 months equality work had been undertaken with the Youth Alliance network.
- Members requested that the new Chief Superintendent for Stockport be invited to this Scrutiny Committee.
- Members welcomed the introduction of networks within physical spaces, such as the One Space Hub in Merseyway and commented on the value added when organisations shared spaces. It was reported that the council was exploring more opportunities for

physical collaborative working, for example elements of the Neighbourhoods and Prevention Programme and Sector 3 would be based at Merseyway. Other opportunities across the wider borough were also being considered.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

5. ANTI-POVERTY UPDATE

A representative of the Director of Public Health submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing an update on anti-poverty activity since the previous report to Communities and Transport Scrutiny Committee on 20 November 2023. The report was framed by the Anti-Poverty Objectives 2024 – 2027 as approved by Cabinet on 12 March 2024.

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 this report, in particular examples of help provided for those in work poverty and support for care leavers. A more detailed breakdown of data for neighbourhoods within the borough was requested, in order to help identify pockets of deprivation.
- Stockport was a polarised borough in terms of poverty and life would feel different for residents depending on the area in which they lived or challenged they faced such as disabilities. It was important for the local authority to have an understanding of residents' circumstances.
- The disparity in poverty was one of the most complex issues faced by the borough.
- The anti poverty strategy made headway on day to day issues in schools and at the heart of the community. Members welcomed the inclusion of the topic of housing quality and support for tenants.
- In order to provide a picture of poverty across the borough, a variety of data sets were drawn upon. Ward specific data was the goal, but it was necessary to take data from the Office of National Statistics or other sources and it was not possible to have control over the sample size. Officers would continue to make efforts to provide more detailed data.
- The School Uniform Project was a welcome scheme and was popular with the youth climate assembly. Members asked whether the council could do more to facilitate this project.
- In response it was stated that whilst lots of schools had undertaken poverty proofing, not all had adopted the School Uniform Project and school governors were encouraged to persuade schools so to do.
- A uniform swap-shop had taken place at Brinnington Railway Station; staff at Northern Rail had requested the use of public spaces elsewhere to expand the school coat scheme.
- The narrative of a stigma being attached to wearing second hand school uniform should change; it should be a conscious choice to help the environment.

- The school meal support scheme had come to an end and work was ongoing to ensure families who had been in receipt of free school meals continued to be supported by the council.
- Members welcomed the case studies contained within the report which had been helpful in describing the anti-poverty strategy. The lived experience and listening to residents was a key part of this work and would continue.
- Appendix 1 of the report set out how the socio-economic duty policy would be implemented by the council; the intention was to ensure that it would become embedded in service provision and become part of the council's everyday business.
- It was likely that an anti-poverty network would hold the council to account in its delivery of the socio-economic policy. In so doing there would likely be a role for senior leaders to ensure that the policy was embedded into the work of the council.
- The membership of an anti-poverty network could include community reporters, alongside councillors and officers of the council.
- Members requested updates in relation to the implementation of the socio-economic duty policy.

RESOLVED – (1) That the main report be noted.

(2) That Appendix 1 of the report for submission to Cabinet be noted.

6. CITY REGION SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT SETTLEMENTS – A6 CORRIDOR IMPROVING JOURNEYS

The Director of Place Management submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) presenting the 'City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements (CRSTS) – A6 Corridor Improving Journeys' project for comment.

Anthony Murden (Projects and Projects Manager, TfGM); Dominic Smith (Network Manager for Active Travel, TfGM) and Simon Thomas (Stockport bus driver) attended the meeting to support the discussion and respond to councillors' questions on this item.

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:-

- Representatives from TfGM informed the Scrutiny Committee that the Rapid Transit scheme was designed to address reliability challenges, particularly in journeys to and from regional and town centres. Primarily the scheme was intended to deliver benefits for bus travel with an extension to the bus lane of over a kilometre. The scheme also supported active travel, including cycling, however funding was not available to deliver all aspects immediately and that was part of the longer-term vision.
- Current funding levels could not accommodate segregated cycle lanes along the A6, however the design of the scheme provided scope to add cycle lanes in the future.
- A bus driver representative expressed support for the scheme. A continuous bus lane from the McVities factory on the A6 to Stockport College was advantageous for drivers, including allowing drivers to have their breaks on time.
- It would be advantageous to extend the bus lane past the Hatworks museum in order to assist the flow of traffic.

- Bus drivers did not have an issue with cyclists using bus lanes, particularly with the roll out of electric bus vehicles. The exception along the A6 was the hill from Merseyway to Stockport College where it would be preferable for cyclists to be fed away from the main road.
- Pedestrian crossings along the A6 ought to be more wheelchair accessible. A number of wheelchair users were frequent travellers on the 192 bus route, but the time allowed at some crossings were too short for wheelchair users; buses often shielded vulnerable road users from other vehicles.
- It was noted that there was no easy crossing point for pedestrians across the A6 next to Interchange Park; the council was looking to introduce a crossing at that location which would link the park with Mersey Square.
- At some bus stops, passengers walked into the road in order to board; it was suggested that each bus stop should be long enough to accommodate two buses to avoid that situation.
- As part of the Bee Network, TfGM met regularly with bus drivers and union representatives in order to seek their views. A crossing had been added at Longsight following consultation with drivers.
- Where bus lanes were coloured differently to the road, car users were less likely to drive on it.
- It was important to maintain a high standard of road surface on bus lanes for the benefit of buses and cyclists.
- As part of the conditions of funding for the route, TfGM was required to report on the usage of parallel routes for cyclists adjacent to the A6. Current usage would be assessed to establish a baseline and later assessments would assess whether there had been an increase in usage. Evaluations would take place after three years and again after five years.
- Members noted that the report did not include information on how the scheme would align with the council's net zero target. It was reported that the next stage of the scheme would include a detailed outline about how carbon emissions would be addressed.
- TfGM confirmed that discussions with urban traffic control could address issues such as the timing of amber lights which would assist large vehicles such as buses coming to a halt.
- Concern was expressed about some sections of the parallel cycling routes. For example the Edgeley route required cyclists to use a dangerous industrial unit which would not encourage residents to cycle.
- In response it was stated that, currently, it was not possible to accommodate separate bus and cycle lanes along most of the A6. The current scheme focused on connecting protected junctions, which protect cyclists, with existing and new bus lanes. It was stated that the bus lanes allowed for 20 buses per hour which was preferable for cyclists to sharing the road with 900 vehicles per hour.
- It was acknowledged that there were challenges in the creation of parallel cycle routes and that in order to encourage active travel and improve walking and cycling it was necessary to create attractive parallel routes. TfGM stated that it would work with Stockport Council in order to address the concerns raised.
- Further consultation would take place on a number of aspects of the scheme including signage, in particular how signage would encourage cyclists to use parallel routes and speed bumps.
- It was confirmed that the A6 route was a part of the Bee Network Route.

- Stockport was at the forefront of innovative traffic calming measures to aid routes for cyclists.
- It remained possible to tweak the design of the A6 bus lane scheme at the second design state to accommodate schemes such as School Streets by, for example, widening pavements.
- There had been some press coverage related to floating bus stops, in particular related to safety concerns for visually impaired pedestrians. The data revealed that floating bus stops created a conflict between pedestrians and cyclists but this was preferable to putting vulnerable road users in conflict with large vehicles. The Vision Zero project aimed for no deaths and serious injuries on Greater Manchester Roads which included pedestrians injured by cyclists.
- TfGM was working with a number of interest groups, including blind and partially sighted residents, to obtain user experiences. Those fed into improvements in technology such as a camera trained on a cycle lane which will inform a visually impaired person whether it is safe to cross.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the following recommendations be made for the A6 Corridor Improving Journeys scheme:

- (a) That further consultations take place with bus drivers and associated Trades Unions prior to the design detail stage of the A6 Corridor Improving Journeys scheme.
- (b) That further investigation is undertaken to consider opportunities to create protected junctions either as part of this scheme or as part of related emerging schemes.
- (c) That a clear statement for the future ambition for entirety of the A6 be produced and that this Scrutiny Committee be given the opportunity to contribute to that vision.
- (d) That the scheme takes stronger steps to align with the council's aim to become carbon neutral by 2038, following the declaration of a climate emergency in 2019, by prioritising and encouraging more of a modal shift to active travel methods within the business case and detailed design work.

7. GRITTING AND THE PROVISION OF GRIT BINS IN STOCKPORT

The Director of Place Management submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which aimed to clarify the council's position on the placement of grit bins, how they were used and how requests for additional bins were considered by officers.

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:-

- Although there was a provision of 250 gritting bins in Stockport, members commented that they were not evenly distributed across the borough. Pavement gritting did not take place in some areas and this was not compatible with the council's attempts to encourage residents out of their cars for short journeys. Furthermore, older residents did not feel safe on icy pavements.
- In response, it was stated that the council had applied a risk criteria to the gritting of pavements and gritted based on location such as those near stations and schools. That

approach reflected what the council was able to manage within its funding and resources.

- Provision of grit bins in an area which didn't currently have one could be made on an exceptional basis in a location which might be considered high risk. Areas considered to be a particularly high risk included those with steep hills.
- Members requested that steep residential areas with a high population of elderly residents be included in the gritting programme.
- Members were advised that, whilst officers could consider individual requests for gritting roads on a case by case basis, it was not possible to make a wholesale change to the gritting programme due to funding issues.
- Members could use ward highways budgets to fund grit bins for their local areas.
- On occasions when snow and ice persisted, precincts were gritted. The gritting was carried out by the same people who clean streets and there were not enough of them to grit all areas, although attempts were made to grit as quickly as possible.
- Some gritting was undertaken by other organisations, for example railway companies gritted stations and hospitals gritted hospital car parks.
- Main roads were gritted first and it would, therefore, be preferable for cyclists to be kept as near as possible to those main roads so that they benefit from grit overspray in icy conditions.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

8. RAPID TRANSIT STRATEGY

The Director of Place Management submitted a joint report of the Directors of Place Management and Deputy Chief Executive (copies of which had been circulated) detailing the Greater Manchester Rapid Transit Strategy which set out the rationale and aspirations around increasing connectivity throughout Greater Manchester (GM) where new and improved rapid transit was intended to build the Bee Network, providing an integrated transport system that will support delivery of sustainable growth across the city-region.

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:-

- Members suggested that the next meeting of the Bee Network Committee would be a good opportunity to raise the issue of the Metrolink service being brought to Stockport.
- Members commented that there had been public discussion of the Metrolink coming to Stockport since 1992; Stockport had been waiting a long time for an integrated transport network.
- In response it was stated that a significant amount of work was taking place in order to deliver an integrated transport network for Stockport. The steps outlined in the report represented the first stages of that work.
- Stockport was hopeful that it was the forerunner in being presented to Government as a ready-made, fundable scheme for the Metrolink. The council was confident that it had sufficient funding and was working with TfGM to take the strategy to the next stage.

- Stockport had distinguishing features ahead of other authorities such as its railway station, the success and buoyancy of the town centre and a gateway into Manchester which meant that Stockport would add value to the Metrolink network.
- It was noted by members that promises had been made to bring the Metrolink to Stockport at a GM level and it had still not happened. Furthermore, Stockport paid for the Metrolink through the Bee Network and the Great Manchester Public Transport Executive.
- The Metrolink was a reserved matter which meant that the Government's Treasurer must be convinced that there is a demonstrable economic benefit to it which outweighed the investment.
- It was also stated that some elements of the network were on the cusp of being delivered such as Cheadle railway station which was expected to open next year.
- A Tameside to Stockport Service would, if delivered, begin in Manchester, enabling a connection between Reddish and Manchester Victoria. The 'Restoring your Railways' project had been cancelled, however work was still taking place to lobby for a route along that rail line.
- The council was lobbying not only to bring the tram to Stockport but also improvements to rail, with hopes for a tram / train line to Stalybridge.

RESOLVED – (1) That the strategic opportunity this strategy brings for the borough be welcomed.

(2) That the funding having been identified for developing the business case of Next Stop Stockport as one of three Metrolink schemes prioritised for early development be noted.

9. FINAL SCRUTINY REVIEW REPORT - STOCKPORT'S COMMUNAL CORRIDORS: SECURING THE SAFETY, CLEANLINESS AND BIODIVERSITY

The Director of Place Management submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated)) detailing the findings of the review carried out by the Scrutiny Review Panel into Stockport's Communal Corridors: Securing the Safety, Cleanliness and Biodiversity.

The Scrutiny Committee was invited to make amendments to the report prior to its submission to the Cabinet.

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:-

- Many of the recommendations of the Scrutiny Review panel centred around communications; it was always good to improve communications wherever possible and officers could incorporate updates about gully cleansing at ward briefings.
- The suggestion that residents be provided with information about how to green local spaces was welcomed.
- Members requested that the council educates residents about the harm caused by putting concrete down gullies.

- Members also requested further guidance for residents on the subject of unadopted highways; what that meant for rights of way and what services the council would provide. Clarity would also help residents to take ownership of those spaces.
- A report on the three-year gully cleansing programme was expected to come to this Scrutiny Committee in the Autumn of 2025.
- When the three year programme came to an end the gully cleansing work, particularly gullies which were known flood points, was planned to continue.
- It was reported that the three year programme had highlighted the extent of damage to some of the borough's gullies and consideration must be given to the repair and replacement of gullies as well as the cleansing programme.

RESOLVED – (1) That the draft 'Stockport's Communal Corridors: Securing the Safety, Cleanliness and Biodiversity' be approved and adopted.

(2) That the thanks of the Scrutiny Committee be extended to all those who took part in the Scrutiny Review.

10. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

A representative of the Assistant Director for Legal & Democratic Governance submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) setting out planned agenda items for the Scrutiny Committee's next meeting and Forward Plan items that fall within the remit of the Scrutiny Committee.

Members requested that consideration be given to the apparent lack of communication between utilities companies in digging up highways. It was suggested that representative from three or four of the main utilities companies be invited to a future meeting of this Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 9.22 pm