

ECONOMY, REGENERATION & CLIMATE CHANGE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting: 17 October 2024
At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

Councillor Claire Vibert (Chair) in the chair; Councillor James Frizzell (Vice-Chair); Councillors Jake Austin, Will Dawson, Micheala Meikle, David Meller, Dena Ryness and Aron Thornley.

1. MINUTES

The minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meeting held on 17 October 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Thanks were expressed to former Councillor, Ian Powney, for his work on the Economy, Regeneration and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee.

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 interests were declared:

Personal and prejudicial interests

<u>Councillor</u>	<u>Interest</u>
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David Meller	Agenda items 7 'Update on delivery of the ONE Stockport Economic Plan' and 8 'Stockport Town Centre Residential Design Guide' as a board member of Stockport Mayoral Development Corporation (MDC). The MDC was referred to within the reports.
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Agenda item 7 'Update on delivery of the ONE Stockport Economic Plan' as 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).

<u>Officer</u>	<u>Interest</u>
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Paul Richards	Agenda items 7 'Update on delivery of the ONE Stockport Economic Plan' and 8 'Stockport Town Centre Residential Design Guide' as Chief Executive of Stockport MDC. The MDC was referred to within the reports.
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3. CALL-IN

There were no call-in items to consider.

4. DRAFT STOCKPORT LOCAL PLAN UPDATE

Members received a verbal update on the Draft Stockport Local Plan.

The following comments were made/issues raised:

- Officers had completed the response to the government consultation of the new National Planning Policy Framework.
- It was requested that future meetings of the Development Plan Working Party be diarised.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

5. UPDATE ON CREATING STRONG, VIBRANT AND HEALTHY DISTRICT CENTRES

The Director of Place Management submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which provided an update on how the council was working with stakeholders to support the development of the borough's eight district centres.

The following comments were made/issues raised:

- It was reported that vacancy rates in the borough's district centres were lower than the national average.
- It was hoped that the work of the Scrutiny Review Panel 'District and Local Centres - best practice and building upon it' would help to inform the work to support the vibrancy of Stockport's district centres, including the information portal in development. The portal was expected to consist of information helpful to local businesses and organisations.
- It was noted that footfall counters in district centres were fixed.
- It was advised that funding for district centres was split equally between the eight district centres.

RESOLVED – (1) that the progress in delivering projects and initiatives in the district centres be noted; and

(2) that the plans to develop an information portal to support businesses and organisations in large local centres be noted.

6. UPDATE ON DELIVERY OF THE ONE STOCKPORT ECONOMIC PLAN

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which provided an update on the progress of the first delivery plan for the One Stockport Economic Plan since its launch and set out the proposed next steps to create a second delivery plan.

The following comments were made/issues raised:

- The plan was expected to be agile, responsive and align with the council's priorities. It would also reflect how best to respond to the current local economic context, conditions and challenges.
- Members commended the new Skills Plan. This Skills Plan was a critical piece of work supporting the One Stockport Economic Plan, and part of this work was to connect people with the investment taking place in the borough. Since arriving in Stockport, it was noted that KAO Data had been supporting a local college with lesson resources for pupils. It was also advised that there could be an opportunity for the heat generated from the data centre to be used in the District Heat Network scheme. The team worked closely with the Education department at the council to ensure joined up working on the Skills Plan.
- It was suggested that electric vehicle (EV) charging points be installed at Life Leisure facilities across Stockport as 'medium stay' locations. It was noted that EV charging points were being installed across the borough in phases and updates on this piece of work would be reported to the Communities & Transport Scrutiny Committee.
- It was queried as to how many employees were benefitting from their employers being signed up to the Good Employment Charter. This information would be sought and circulated to the Scrutiny Committee for their information. The team continued to encourage employers to sign up to the charter.
- It was noted that the council were reliant on Office for National Statistics data for the numbers of people in work, which was based on local surveys and samples.
- Work to deliver job fairs in local communities was commended. It was noted that the council sought good employers for the fairs.
- In response to a question as to how the council supported students where there were concerns around the potential for young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), it was noted that a new manager was in post with NEET oversight and the team regularly liaised with employers on work in this area.
- In relation to the Good Employment Charter, it was suggested that a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee detailing the views of businesses on the pros and cons of the real-living wage from their perspective.
- It was noted that the MDC supported impactful social value work locally and helped contractors to focus their efforts.
- Stockport's Climate Action Now (CAN) Summit 2024 was scheduled to be held on Friday 22 November 2024 at Stockport Town Hall.

RESOLVED – (1) that the report be noted; and

(2) that a review of the current delivery plan and the production of a second delivery plan be endorsed.

7. STOCKPORT TOWN CENTRE RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDE

The Assistant Director for Place Making & Planning submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) detailing the Town Centre Residential Design Guide. The guide set out the council's design expectations for this area of the borough and sought Cabinet approval for the adoption of the guide.

The following comments were made/issues raised:

- Members of the Scrutiny Committee had previously considered the guide in February 2024. Since then, the guide had been subject to a public consultation in which 30 responses had been received. Using input from the consultation, some changes had been made to the document.
- The guide was already being signposted to developers.
- Members were pleased to see that the council had worked closely with Historic England in formulating the document. It was felt important to incorporate Stockport's history into landscaping.
- The guide put the borough in a strong position for high quality development. It was noted that delivering a high-quality material palette for less attractive buildings was important, as was making use of existing buildings e.g., Stopford House was now an award-winning building following its refurbishment.
- Developers would be asked to go the extra mile to reduce emissions and future proof their developments to support the council's goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2030. Policies developed as part of the local plan would also support setting the expectations of the council to developers. The council was leading by example and demonstrating its expectations to developers with developments such as the Interchange and Eco Park. The council would also support developers needing extra help to contribute to the council's goals.

Thanks were expressed to officers for their work on the guide.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

8. CLIMATE ACTION NOW (CAN) ANNUAL GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS REPORT 2023/24

The Director of Place Management submitted the Climate Action Now (CAN) Annual Greenhouse Gas Emissions report for 2023/24 (copies of which had been circulated) detailing the council's progress towards the 2030 net zero target.

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 report highlighted progress made to date in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, as well as the stark reality of the challenges that lay ahead.
- It was reported that Greater Manchester was set to launch its next five-year strategy to tackle climate change.

- The council were working hard to lobby the government on the case for the District Heat Network, which could be a game changer for the borough.
- Members were encouraged to undertake Carbon Literacy training, if they had not already.
- Engagement had been a priority for the council, especially with schools. The fact that different schools had different priorities was a challenge.
- The council's largest suppliers had been asked to monitor their emissions and provide the council with data.
- Officers had been requested to focus on how to decarbonise the council's fleet. It was noted that the cost of electric vehicles and infrastructure was high.
- Members were encouraged to promote the CAN Seed Fund, and it was noted that schools could apply for this funding.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

9. GREATER MANCHESTER LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY - DRAFT FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Director of Place Management submitted the draft Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy (copies of which had been circulated).

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

The following comments were made/issues raised:

- Local authorities had an obligation to protect and build biodiversity.
- Members were advised that the document followed the Lawton Principles and complemented the council's local nature recovery work. Officers in the ecology and planning teams were working closely with colleagues in Greater Manchester on the strategy.
- The document stressed the importance of cleaning up rivers as part of this work.
- It was recognised that there was limited land supply for local nature recovery work. It was noted that connecting existing nature corridors was key.

RESOLVED - That the draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Greater Manchester which had been prepared by Greater Manchester Combined Authority for public consultation be noted.

10. UPDATE ON THE WORK OF THE SCRUTINY REVIEW PANEL

Members received updates from the Chairs of the Scrutiny Review Panels on the work of the panels:

Scrutiny Review Panel – The Accountability of Social Housing Providers to the Council and Residents of Stockport

It was reported that the review was nearing completion. Members were expected to consider one final piece of research before drawing the review to a close at the end of the year.

Scrutiny Review Panel - District and Local Centres - best practice and building upon it

The first meeting of the panel had taken place on 17 September 2024, where the scope of the meeting had been agreed, as well as the co-option of two further members onto the panel. A piece of work to canvass the views of businesses was underway, and feedback on the visits would be considered at the next meeting of the panel in November.

RESOLVED – That the updates be noted.

11. 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.

The following comments were made/issues raised:

- That an update report on the Good Employment Charter, including the real-living wage, had been requested during the meeting was reiterated.
- It was asked that the update on the Out of Borough Placements Pilot be scheduled into the work programme.
- It was noted that a report around the bus depot and zero-emissions buses raised at the last Full Council meeting was expected to be considered by the Scrutiny Committee.
- It was requested that, as far as possible, updates on the Draft Stockport Local Plan be submitted as written updates.
- It was asked that energy usage in schools be investigated, and it was suggested that this report be considered by the CAN Steering Group.

RESOLVED – (1) that the report be noted; and

(2) that the Assistant Director for Legal & Democratic Governance be requested to make arrangements for the abovementioned items to be programmed onto the work programme accordingly.

The meeting closed at 8.27 pm