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## **ECONOMY, REGENERATION & CLIMATE CHANGE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Meeting: 28 November 2024  
At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

Councillor Claire Vibert (Chair) in the chair; Councillor James Frizzell (Vice-Chair); Councillors Jake Austin, Will Dawson, Ian Hunter, 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.

### **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:

<u>Officer</u>	<u>Interest</u>
Mark Glynn	Agenda item 6 'Responding to our Medium-Term Financial Plan' and 7 '2024/25 Mid-Year (Quarter 2) Portfolio Performance and Resources Reports: Climate Change & Environment and Economy, Regeneration & Housing' as Chair of Totally Local Company (TLC). TLC was 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 12 'Bus Franchising Depot Update' by virtue of Category 3 (Schedule 12A) as 'information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority)'.

### **4. CALL-IN**

There were no call-in items to consider.

### **5. DRAFT STOCKPORT LOCAL PLAN UPDATE**

The Assistant Director Place Making and Planning submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) outlining the work that had taken place in relation to the Draft Stockport Local Plan since the pause of the Regulation 18 consultation and provided up-to-date information in relation to publication of the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and proposed next steps for the plan.

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 had previously been considered by members of the Development Plan Working Party (DPWP) at their meeting held on 25 November 2024. The nature and format of future meetings of the DPWP were also agreed at this meeting.
- The indication from government was that the revised NPPF was likely to be published either prior to Christmas or early 2025.
- A call for sites would begin in the near future; the start and end dates to be confirmed. A call for sites asked people (e.g., developers and residents) to put forward land that they would like to see protected or brought forward for development. The last call for sites was held in 2019 and another call for sites was needed to ensure the draft plan was as up-to-date as possible. Members were encouraged to identify sites in their own wards, and it was suggested that a short briefing note be circulated to all members to support them with this piece of work. Thanks were expressed to the Edgeley Community Association for their work to identify sites in the Edgeley ward.
- It was noted that where local authorities were not able to meet housing targets, they would be asked to review green belt sites.
- A further piece of work would need to be commissioned to review green belt land to ensure the draft plan was as up-to-date as possible.
- It was felt that a balance needed to be struck as to the discussions had at DPWP and Scrutiny Committee meetings respectively to ensure no or minimal overlap in discussion.

The Planning Team were congratulated for the professional way they had supported the recent planning inquiry, which further highlighted the importance of having an up-to-date local plan. Congratulations were also expressed to the team for winning awards in two categories at the Royal Town Planning Institute Awards for Planning Excellence 2024 for the Stockport Interchange. It was noted that there was no higher award in planning.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

## **6. RESPONDING TO OUR MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN**

The Cabinet Members for Climate Change & Environment and Economy, Regeneration & Housing submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) outlining the proposed strategic approach in responding to the medium-term financial plan.

The following comments were made/issues raised:

- It was noted that the report and appendix was to be read in conjunction with the MTFP update reports (parts A and B) presented to the Cabinet meeting held on 18 September 2024.
- The Scrutiny Committee were aware of the financial challenges facing the authority and other local authorities across the country.
- It was questioned whether the proposals relating to waste would cause an increase in fly-tipping, which was already an issue in the borough. Further, whether people would begin to burn waste, as waste might not be as easily disposable under the new

proposals. It was reported that these concerns had not come to fruition in other local authority areas in which the proposals had already been implemented. Evidence from other local authorities enabled the council to learn from experience and best practice.

- It was reported that officers had been asked to explore reducing the cost of composting bins, given that composting would be the best option for residents from a biodiversity and environmental perspective.
- It was advised that the proposals presented considered the government's forthcoming mandatory implementation of proposals set out in the resources and waste strategy for England, in which local authorities must ensure that food waste was collected for free on a weekly basis by 31 March 2026. The proposed options were to either pay a fee for a garden and food waste collection, or not pay the fee and receive a standalone food waste collection. It was commented that the proposals within the report would facilitate a smoother transition to the government's revised waste collection arrangements to be introduced in March 2026.
- It was noted that Stockport had some of the best rates of recycling in Greater Manchester.
- It was also noted that waste crews were collecting far less waste than they previously had, given the culture shift and move away from traditional media e.g., newspapers, amongst other factors. Further, residents had the opportunity to purchase a further bin, which meant that households could have greater capacity if they wished.
- It was noted that the option to increase collections based on a 'peak season' would not be possible, as this would increase the risk of a part-year service and the potential issues in staff recruitment and retention as a result; the council tried as far as possible to avoid the use of agency staff.
- There was a discount option proposed for people receiving council tax support. There was no evidence of this specific provision being trialled at other local authorities.
- In response to a question as to capability to maintain Stockport's good recycling rates, it was noted that the forthcoming government strategy would have a significant impact on recycling rates for the country, as well as the ability to track them. The strategy expected to attach value to plastics in the future to incentivise people to recycle e.g., taking plastics that are unable to be recycled with household recycling to the supermarket. Although this would make it more difficult for the council to track recycling rates, recycling rates would be expected to improve.
- It was noted that the larger outdoor food waste caddy held approximately four food bags and was lockable.
- The permit for green waste collection would be a sticker that attaches to a bin, which is linked to the property.
- It was noted that residents could also arrange a one-off collection for garden waste, if needed.
- A concern was raised in relation to people putting garden waste into someone else's bin who did not have a permit and therefore their bin would not be collected. Members were reassured that the council would work with Totally Local Company to address any such issues appropriately.
- It was reported that some 'friends of' and church groups who collected green waste currently received a free service. Further consideration would need to be given as to whether this would continue.
- Larger or additional bins were available for residents wishing to recycle larger amounts of paper and cardboard. It was advised that companies were attempting to streamline cardboard boxes being delivered.

- There was ongoing engagement with trade unions on the matter, and the workforce itself were involved in the shaping of this piece of work. Members were reassured that staff numbers would not be reduced.
- Technology in wagons enabled crews to identify those needing assisted waste collections.
- It was advised that crew rounds would not take any longer if the proposals were implemented, because crews already checked bins for cross-contamination. Further, less bins would be collected as a result of the proposals.
- Good communication with residents around the proposals and next steps was incredibly important.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

## **7. 2024/25 MID-YEAR (QUARTER 2) PORTFOLIO PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES REPORTS: CLIMATE CHANGE & ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY, REGENERATION & HOUSING**

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Place Management submitted Mid-Year Portfolio Performance and Resource Reports for the Climate Change & Environment and Economy, Regeneration & Housing Portfolios for consideration (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 in relation to the Climate Change & Environment portfolio:

- Thanks were expressed to waste collection crews who were out and about in all weather conditions to provide a key service to residents.
- Positive feedback was received on the recent Climate Action Now Summit.
- Officers continued to encourage businesses to undertake carbon literacy training.
- A question was raised as to how the council continued to build up reserves once used. It was noted that this question related to the Corporate, Resource Management & Governance Scrutiny Committee and that a written response would be sought and circulated accordingly.

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

- It was suggested that the recording of the recent Treasury Management member training session be circulated to the Scrutiny Committee for their information. It was noted that the Local Government Association also offered Treasury Management training to members.
- It was noted that no update was available on the rough sleeping leasing scheme funded by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority.
- Members were advised that a member briefing session on development viability would be arranged in the new year.

RESOLVED – That the reports be noted.

## **8. COLLECTION OF WATER CHARGES ON BEHALF OF UNITED UTILITIES**

The Director of Place Management submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which set out the proposal to renew a contract for the council to continue to collect water charges on behalf of United Utilities.

The following comments were made/issues raised:

- Members were advised that United Utilities paid the council commission for collecting water charges. The contract was set to expire in March 2025, and it was proposed that Cabinet consider renewing the contract for a further 5-year period. The scheme had been operating since 2009 and held a variety of benefits which included but was not limited to, protecting tenants and bringing in a commission for the council.
- It was noted that Stockport Homes Groups set out the projects and/or initiatives they planned to invest in as part of their annual business case.
- Any risks continued to be monitored.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

## **9. PROPOSED COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER THE METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL OF STOCKPORT (LAND AT HIGHER HILLGATE/HIGHER BARLOW ROW)**

The Director of Place Management submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which sought Cabinet approval to progress with a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) of land at Higher Hillgate/Higher Barlow Row, Stockport, to enable the development of 24 affordable homes by Stockport Homes Group within the Housing Revenue Account. It was believed that there would be no objections to the CPO.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

## **10. UPDATE ON THE WORK OF THE SCRUTINY REVIEW PANELS**

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

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

Two meetings of the panel had been held and there had been lots of discussion about the feedback received from businesses following member visits to district centre business owners. Members were due to undertake visits to local centre businesses owners and provide feedback on these visits at the panel meeting scheduled 11 December 2024. Members hoped to have conversations with other local authorities about their work with district and local centres as part of the evidence-gathering phase of the review.

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

The next step for the panel was to begin drafting the final report and recommendations for Cabinet. The independent report reviewing Stockport's housing management

arrangements was expected to be received by the council imminently, and it was anticipated that this report would be reviewed to enable the panel to incorporate any consequent findings and/or recommendations they may have into the draft final report of the panel. The draft final report of the panel would be considered by the Scrutiny Committee in advance of Cabinet.

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:

- It was noted that a report on the independent review of Stockport's housing management arrangements was scheduled to be considered at the January meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.
- Further, that an Out of Borough Placement Pilot update was scheduled to be considered at the March meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

Item including information 'not for publication'

## **12. BUS FRANCHISING DEPOT UPDATE**

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing an update on the bus franchising depot.

(Note: the report contained confidential information that had been circulated to members of the Scrutiny Committee only).

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.07 pm