

COMMUNITIES & TRANSPORT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting: 25 November 2024

At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

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

1. MINUTES

The Minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meeting held on 14 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 which they had in any of the items on the agenda for the meeting.

The following interests were declared:-

Personal Interests

Councillor

Interest

Steve Gribbon and
Dominic Hardwick Agenda Item 10 – ‘Update on 2024 Playing Pitch Strategy and
Local Football Facilities Plan’ as members of Stockport Rugby
Club.

Dan Oliver Agenda Item 5 – ‘2024/25 Mid-Year (Quarter 2) Portfolio
Performance and Resources Reports: Communities, Culture &
Sport and Parks, Highways and Transport Services’ as an
employee of Greater Manchester Poverty Action.

Officer

Officer

Interest

Mark Glynn Agenda Item 5 – ‘2024/25 Mid-Year (Quarter 2) Portfolio
Performance and Resources Reports: Communities, Culture &
Sport and Parks, Highways and Transport Services’ as a Director
of Totally Local Company.

3. CALL-IN

There were no call-in items to consider.

4. RESPONDING TO OUR MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN

The Cabinet Member for Communities, Culture & Sport and Cabinet Member for Parks, Highways & Transport Services submitted a joint report (copies of which had been circulated) outlining the strategic approach in responding to the medium-term financial plan. The report was read in conjunction with the MTFP update reports (both parts A and B) presented to the Cabinet meeting on 18 September 2024.

The Cabinet Member for Parks, Highways and Transport Services (Councillor Grace Baynham) and 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:-

- In response to a question about the proposed savings of approximately £300,000 it was stated that efforts were being made to minimise the impact of those savings on frontline services.
- A strategic overview was underway to assess job roles and the loss of any roles would not necessarily be through redundancy. It was intended that no critical roles or functions would be lost to the council.
- It was acknowledged, however, that the loss of job roles year on year would result in a loss of resilience.
- Plans were in place for trades unions to be consulted in relation to the loss of job roles.
- There were no plans for a universal shrinkage of teams across the service; overall very few roles would be lost and only a minority of the planned savings related to job roles.
- The Strategic Intent to improve Stockport's rail offer involved a variety of projects including work at Cheadle Railway Station, working with Network Rail and TfGM to provide a more modern central Stockport Station and working with partners to improve rail capacity.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

5. 2024/25 MID-YEAR (QUARTER 2) PORTFOLIO PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES REPORTS: COMMUNITIES, CULTURE & SPORT AND PARKS, HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT SERVICES

The Director of Place Management and the Director of Public Health submitted a joint report (copies of which had been circulated) setting out the Mid-Year Portfolio Performance and Resource Reports (PPRRs) for the Communities, Culture & Sport and Parks, Highways & Transport Services Portfolios.

The Portfolio Reports were based on the 2024/25 Portfolio Performance and Resource Agreements (PPRAs), which were considered by the Committee on 10 June 2024 and approved by Cabinet on 25 June 2024.

The Mid-Year Reports focussed on delivery of the portfolio priorities from April to September 2024 and included forecast performance and financial data (where this was available) for the Portfolios, along with an update on the portfolio savings programmes.

The Cabinet Member for Parks, Highways and Transport Services (Councillor Grace Baynham) and 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:-

Communities, Culture & Sport

- It was noted that incidents of anti-social behaviour had increased in recent years; this was a trend across the country and resulted in partly from a welcome increase in reporting of anti-social incidents.
- There were many reasons for the increase in anti-social behaviour. The council continued to work with police to tackle this issue and some examples of action included the town centre operation and work to tackle off-road bikes.
- The newly appointed Chief Superintendent Lewis Hughes had expressed a wish to attend a future meeting of this committee to discuss this work.
- It was noted that 101 calls to the police were being answered in a timely manner.
- It was noted that the police had successfully employed drones to discover where off-road bikes were being stored.
- The portfolio holder undertook to talk to police about a heat-map of anti-social behaviour.
- Members requested that the Greater Manchester Police website include a calendar of Police and Communities Together (PACT) meetings.
- The Communities, Culture and Sport portfolio showed a deficit of £0.085 million; this was a result of not having generated as much income within the portfolio as forecasted.
- The Uniforms for All initiative had been launched at the Climate Action Now (CAN) summit and had resulted in school uniform being donated in an amount the equivalent of the weight of a camel. Framing the initiative as being related to CAN as well as addressing socio-economic matters had worked well.
- It was further reported that most donations had been for primary school uniforms and the initiative would be expanded to incorporate Family Hubs and other community venues to allow more residents to access the scheme.
- In response to a question about socio-economic impact assessments across the council, it was reported that additional groups had been added to the equality impact assessment. The council had adopted the Greater Manchester integrated assessment tool which would help it to make better decisions by having a greater level of granularity and understanding of the different ways in which areas within the borough experienced socioeconomic disadvantage.
- The school poverty-proofing scheme was voluntary and some schools had been more open to it than others. School governors were encouraged to ask schools to take part in the poverty-proofing scheme. It was also reported that more primary schools than high schools had taken part in that scheme.
- It was noted that the council had sought to support networks with accessing sustainable funding and that work had resulted in an increase in the number of successful funding bids.
- In terms of the diversity of the VCFSE sector, efforts were underway to create as diverse an alliance as possible with community networks working proactively to ensure a wide breadth of representation.

- The amber rating for libraries reflected that savings were being made through natural turnover and the council was, therefore, unable to make all its savings immediately.
- It was reported that artists and groups were currently putting in bids to work at Stock Room.
- The legacy of Stockport Town of Culture included the Stockport Sunday Spectacular, the markets and opening of new bars. It was reported that people had come to Stockport to attend its Town of Culture events and had wanted to return.
- The Hat Museum had used the Town of Culture as a springboard for its reopening.
- It was also reported that there was greater confidence in the artworld community which had nurtured connections made during the Town of Culture period.
- Officers undertook to provide an update on the £2.6 million awarded through the Cultural Development Fund.
- It was reported that the Inclusive Job Fairs which had taken place within local communities had been successful and achieved positive feedback. Further Inclusive Job Fairs were planned throughout the borough.
- Members requested an update at a future meeting of this Scrutiny Committee on the new governance model for socio-economic duty, including the powers to hold the council to account.

Parks, Highways and Transport Services

- In terms of strategic transport projects, improvements to access at Reddish North and Bredbury stations were noted. It was reported that the council had been in regular talks with TfGM about improving access to other railway stations across Stockport.
- Work at Cheadle railway station was expected to commence in January 2025.
- In response to a question about the Metrolink coming to Stockport, it was reported that this was a scheme requiring national government treasury approval. Stockport was required to demonstrate that there was a strong business case for this scheme.
- The business case being worked on was a line from East Didsbury to the centre of Stockport with hopes for an extension to Hazel Grove.
- Consultation on the business case for the Metrolink was expected to run into the spring of 2025 and from there it would be considered by the Treasury. It was hoped that the result of this bid would be known by the end of 2025.
- Should the council be successful in its bid to bring Metrolink to Stockport, it was likely that a Transport and Works Order Act would be required along with statutory and planning approvals. The Metrolink was not, therefore, an immediate prospect but the council had a route to delivery.
- Members commented on the work of community volunteers who helped frontline services. Those groups were supported by the council, for example by the removal of green waste following clearance exercises.
- Members also commented positively on the council's District Centre Managers who had made a big difference to the borough's district centres and had brought traders together. This work had enabled local residents to use their district centres more regularly and to shop locally.
- The process for the implementation of a 20 mph speed limit on roads where average speeds were below 24 mph was through Area Committees for signage funding and took approximately six to twelve weeks. Larger schemes which required traffic calming took twelve months minimum to implement.

- School were able to approach the council for information on the School Streets scheme. There was tailored approach to the delivery of these schemes based on the school and location. School Streets were a human resource intense initiative and schools were required to be fully invested in a scheme prior to implementation.
- It was reported that road safety around schools was an ongoing initiative undertaken on an annual basis.
- Local job fairs had been successful in recruiting a number of school crossing patrol officers who were currently being trained.
- Officers undertook to provide an update on the provision of EV charging points to a future meeting of this Scrutiny Committee.
- Members commented that the street cleansing outcomes reported within the portfolio performance and resource report did not necessarily match residents' perceptions. In response it was stated that measures of street-cleansing had been based on the efficiency of the work of TLC and officers undertook random inspections of street cleansing work undertaken by TLC.
- A borough-wide spring clean was scheduled for 2025 where volunteers would be asked to identify problem areas for street cleansing.
- It was reported that gritting had been undertaken across all priority routes following a recent cold snap but that heavy rain had washed the grit away. That period of heavy rain had been followed by zero temperatures. It was reported to have been a unique set of weather conditions.
- Members noted that TLC wagons had been converted to gritters during the cold spell and were pleased by the flexible approach. Members also commented positively on the level of communication from officers on the gritting undertaken in that period.
- It was noted that no grit had been placed at the entrance to the Stockport Interchange, leading to dangerous conditions; this would be reported to TfGM.
- The RAG rating within the portfolio for bereavement services was noted to be amber, however it was reported that two mechanisms were now working and that bringing the bereavement service in house had been a positive move.
- It was planned that a report would be submitted to all Area Committees on the subject of free and permitted parking.

RESOLVED – (1) That the Mid-Year Portfolio Performance and Resource Reports be noted.

(2) That the progress against delivering key projects, priority outcomes, targets and budgets for 2024/25 be noted.

(3) Highlight key areas of and responsibility for taking forward corrective action to address any performance or resource issues.

(4) Highlight any significant issues or changes to be fed back to the Cabinet alongside the Corporate Performance and Resource Report.

(5) Identify how areas of strong performance and good practice can be shared in other services.

6. UPDATE ON 2024 PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY AND LOCAL FOOTBALL FACILITIES PLAN

A representative of the Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing details about the 2024 Playing Pitch Strategies (PPS), the development of new third generation artificial pitch provision and the PPS methodology and background information.

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:-

- In response to a question about the under provision of late teen pitches, it was reported that the council had an annual off-season maintenance programme for grass pitches, however there was only a small window for this work to take place.
- The council was also looking at opportunities for developing new 3G pitches, although the provision of those pitches was dependent upon land availability, suitability and funding. The council also worked with key club partners to bid for funding from the Football Foundation. There had been some recent successes in bringing additional pitches to the borough and further opportunities were being sought.
- Where school pitches were partly funded by the Football Foundation, it was a requirement for the school to allow community use of the pitches.
- Members commented positively on the teams who maintained pitches across the borough. Furthermore, Spurley Hey Football Club had provided positive feedback on the playing pitch strategy.
- It was reported that that the Cheadle Town Stingers had been promoted to Tier 4.

RESOLVED – (1) That the 2024 PPS completion, methodology and approach to developing new 3G provision be noted.

(2) That the formal adoption of the 2024 PPS by the Cabinet Member for Communities, Culture & Sport and the Cabinet Member for Parks, Highways & Transportation Services be noted.

7. THRIVING NEIGHBOURHOODS SERVICES REDESIGN

The Director of Place Management submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) updating members on a reorganisation of the Thriving Neighbourhoods teams.

The Cabinet Member for Parks, Highways and Transport Services (Councillor Grace Baynham) attended the meeting to respond to councillors' questions. The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- In response to a question about the work of Team Around the Place Captains who were now covering more ground, it was reported that residents should not notice any changes to service delivery as a result of this change.
- It was further reported that the operation redesign had not impacted service funding. The redesign had brought two services together, with seven managers for each Area Committee area.

- A Service Plan would be set up in order to measure the success of Thriving Neighbourhoods. This plan was part of wider neighbourhood and prevention strategies.
- Residents should see a more seamless service across council and other provisions.
- Members requested that variations in the populations of Area Committee areas be taken into account in the delivery of neighbourhood services and allocation of resources. In response it was stated that managers would assess areas of greater need. A dynamic approach would be taken in order to respond to changes.
- It was planned that Neighbourhood Managers would report to Area Committees on a semi-regular basis.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

8. FOURTH ANNUAL FLOOD RESILIENCE REPORT

The Director of Place Management submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing an update on the various roles and responsibilities of the Council with regard to flooding and flood resilience including its roles as the Lead Local Flood Authority, Highway Authority and landowner; both of greenspace and working with Stockport Homes with its significant housing assets.

The Cabinet Member for Parks, Highways and Transport Services (Councillor Grace Baynham) attended the meeting to respond to councillors' questions.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- Members commented positively on plans to identify and record ghost ponds. It was noted that in recent decades many ponds, previously used as storage systems for incidents of heavy rain, had been drained and built upon.
- Members also commented positively on sustainable drainage systems at schools, citing an example at Greave Primary School which had proved to be a success. School children had used the pond to learn about environmental issues and biodiversity and the location of the pond had helped to prevent waterlogging of the school's football pitch.
- It was noted that there were opportunities across the borough, not just on council owned land, but private land and schools to stop water flow and flooding. Ward councillors were encouraged to identify organisations within their areas where flood prevention measures could be implemented.
- It was reported that flooding officers provided expertise on flooding in relation to planning applications.
- The tarmacking of drives within urban areas had the effect of causing additional water flow and flooding. Residents were considered to have a responsibility to hold and drain water on their land. The council did not have the resources, however, to engage in enforcement activities for tarmacked driveways. Local roads were not designed to deal with current levels of drainage required and more water was coming onto to roads where water was running off properties.
- In terms of culverts it was reported that efforts were being made to de-culvert to slow the flow of water.
- Efforts to hold water in the hills was beneficial to Stockport.

- Members noted the water management scheme at Woodbank Park where water was held in the park to prevent flooding local neighbourhoods, then slowly released into the river.
- Members commented positively on the council's flood prevention work at Crossley Road, undertaken in conjunction with Manchester City Council
- Funding for flood prevention measures came from Capital Funding and bids for external funds.

RESOLVED – That the work undertaken to improve flood resilience in Stockport and support the continued partnership working and investment in these areas be noted.

9. GREEK STREET BRIDGE SCRUTINY REPORT

The Director of Place Management submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing an update on the works required, and schedule associated with, the Network Rail led Greek Street bridge renewal project. This included providing an overview of the potential subsequent disruption and the responding mitigation works.

The Cabinet Member for Parks, Highways and Transport Services (Councillor Grace Baynham) attended the meeting to respond to councillors' questions.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- It was reported that a statutory service bridge would be installed as part of the bridge replacement works. The service bridge would provide access for utilities works to enable the construction work to commence; the public would not have access to the service bridge.
- In response to a question about road closures around Greek Street at the Shaw Heath boundary it was reported that there would still be pedestrian access to the Armoury pub, but no vehicular access directly in front of the pub. Loading and unloading provision would be made on Greek Street to the rear of the pub to allow for deliveries.
- It was reported that officers were in the process of communicating with local organisations affected by the closure of the roundabout.
- In terms of wider communication to those commuting in and out of Stockport, this would be delivered by the council along with partner organisations. For example, the rail industry would be responsible for communications about railway closures.
- The three main organisations involved in the Greek Street Bridge replacement were the council, Network Rail and the contractor undertaking the work. A range of information would be provided from a variety of sources including on-site information, face to face events and letter drops. A public consultation event was also planned and had been advertised by way of a website and press release.
- Social media was also being employed to deliver information about the bridge closure and the contractor had employed a project manager who would, over time, take responsibility for communications from the contractor side.
- In response to a question about the consequences of an over-run of the expected timescale for this project, it was reported that the council was optimistic that this would not be the case, but in the event members would be advised on how the scheme would proceed.

- Network Rail was reported to have a good track record in terms of delivering major infrastructure on time.
- Members requested that residents be informed that Stockport Station would not be a good pick up point during these works.
- In response to a question about the monitoring of diversionary routes, it was reported that plans for diversions would be finalised in the coming weeks. It was thought that drivers would find alternative routes to diversions and, as a consequence, the council planned to monitor and respond to alternative diversionary routes.
- Members commented on the diversionary routes where an HGV bans existed due to safety concerns.
- Members commented that, whilst these works were necessary, local residents, particularly around Edgeley, were going to be impacted by these works over a twelve month period. Assurances were sought that the council was prepared to demonstrate the leadership and cooperation necessary during the construction of the new bridge.
- In response it was stated that the council recognised that the impact of these works on local residents and commuters, which had not been underestimated. A working group had been set up between officers and local members to try to ensure that the process would be as smooth as possible and the council would continue to work with the local community.
- Members requested that this Scrutiny Committee should endorse the council resolution related to the Greek Street Bridge works.

RESOLVED – (1) That Cabinet be recommended to:-

- (i) Give approval to enter into the Bridgeguard 3 agreement and make any payments to Network Rail necessary under this agreement.
 - (ii) Agree that the decisions related to the necessary diversion routes are delegated to the Cabinet Member for Parks, Highways & Transport Services in conjunction with officers following engagement with members.
 - (iii) Agree that the decisions related to the final highway layout on the new structure are delegated to the Cabinet Member for Parks, Highways & Transport Services following consultation with the Member Working Group.
- (2) That it be noted that a prior approval application will be considered under the Councils adopted scheme of delegation and the determination of the application would be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive.
- (3) That the motion agreed by the Council Meeting on 21 November 2024 be endorsed by this Scrutiny Committee, as follows: -
- (i) To write to the GMCA, Transport for Greater Manchester, GM Transport Commissioner, Chair of the Bee Network Committee and the GM Mayors Office asking them to allocate CRSTS ATF monies to this scheme as soon as possible given the uniqueness of this project and the disruption it will bring to Edgeley residents.
 - (ii) In the alternative, recommend that the Cabinet agrees to draw capital funding internally as a Borough to deliver this small scheme before the Armoury

Roundabout is replaced given shovels could be in the ground to deliver this scheme within a short time frame with a view that the scheme is delivered by March 2025.

10. STREETWORKS AND THIRD-PARTY UNDERGROUND ASSETS REPORT

The Director of Place Management submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) giving details related to the highways of Stockport which had a large number of different utilities running underneath them. These included supply mains for water, gas, electric, phone and broadband connections as well as drainage and sewers. These utilities needed maintenance on both a planned and reactive basis to ensure that our residents and business remained safe and had access to the facilities they need and rely upon.

The Cabinet Member for Parks, Highways and Transport Services (Councillor Grace Baynham) attended the meeting to respond to councillors' questions.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- In response to a question about fixed penalty notices or fines for utilities contractors who do not adhere to the agreed permit, it was reported that the council made use of a variety of powers including charging where defect work was required, the issuing of Section 74 notices for works overrunning along with issuing fixed penalty notices.
- The Traffic Management Team was responsible for tracking utilities works, liaising with contractors and, where necessary, issuing penalties. The team consisted of six to eight officers, with a further officer due to come on board to deal with major capital schemes.
- Revenues from Section 74 penalties varied, being approximately £36,000 in 2021-22, £111,000 in 2022/23 and £31,000 in 2023/24.
- It was reported that the council received 200 applications for permits each day. Most of the utilities within the borough, relied upon by residents and businesses, were housed underneath highways. This created a conflict which the council managed, working with statutory undertakers to try to reduce the time required for streetworks.
- Members referred to examples of utilities companies stopping and restarting streetworks and queried whether that amounted to a loophole within the terms of their permit. In response it was stated that where works ran over, contractors could apply for a permit extension.
- In response to a question about the notification period for streetworks, it was reported that the council attempted to notify as efficiently as possible. Attempts were made to prevent overburdening members with information on streetworks. Members commented that they would prefer to receive more information and use discretion to determine what information should be disseminated to local residents.
- It was reported that approximately 50 per cent of streetworks were carried out on an emergency basis.
- In response to a question about how the council determined whether proposed works were of an urgent nature, it was reported that this was carried out both retrospectively and proactively.
- Members stated that there was an expectation that they were taking steps to minimise disturbances caused by streetworks wherever possible.
- It was also commented that a lack of investment in recent years had led to a situation where a high number of works were carried out on an emergency basis.

- Members referred to the One Network mapping service which gave details of streetworks.
- Lane Rental was a tool used in other areas, particularly London, on the key route networks to assign a time period where contractors could work on the roads; stiff penalties were issued where works overran. Greater Manchester was in the process of developing a similar scheme which would apply to three major key routes in Stockport, being the A555, A34 and A6.
- Members requested that a breakdown of the monetary value of Section 74 fines and fixed penalty notices be circulated, along with a breakdown of the types of permits issued by the council for streetworks.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

11. 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.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the Assistant Director for Legal & Democratic Governance be recommended to programme the following items into the Scrutiny Committee's work programme for the 2024/25 Municipal Year:-

- A report on the Cultural Development Fund.
- An invitation to representative from the Rail Industry to address the Scrutiny Committee on operational matters.
- A report on the One Stockport Community Safety Partnership.
- An invitation to Chief Superintendent Lewis Huges to address the Scrutiny Committee on crime and policing work.
- A report on obstructions to incorporate pathways and EV chargers.

The meeting closed at 9.04 pm