



STOCKPORT

METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Meeting of the Council Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Stockport on 16 January 2025 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT

The Mayor (Councillor Suzanne Wyatt) in the chair; Deputy Mayor (Councillor Kerry Waters); Councillors Geoff Abell, Shan Alexander, Jake Austin, Joe Barratt, Rosemary Barratt, Grace Baynham, Rachel Bresnahan, Jon Byrne, Christine Carrigan, Asa Caton, Angie Clark, Laura Clingan, Liz Crix, Peter Crossen, Dickie Davies, Will Dawson, Dean Fitzpatrick, Colin Foster, Helen Foster-Grime, James Frizzell, Sue Glithero, Graham Greenhalgh, Steve Gribbon, Dominic Hardwick, Helen Hibbert, Keith Holloway, Ian Hunter, Mark Hunter, Dallas Jones, Mark Jones, Jilly Julian, Huma Khan, Gary Lawson, Carole McCann, Holly McCormack, Jeremy Meal, Micheala Meikle, Wendy Meikle, David Meller, Mike Newman, Dan Oliver, Mark Roberts, Dena Ryness, Frankie Singleton, Catherine Stuart, Leah Taylor, Aron Thornley, Sue Thorpe, Claire Vibert, Karl Wardlaw, Pete West, Wendy Wild, David Wilson, Rachel Wise, Paul Wright and Alex Wynne.

1. FORMALITIES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

(i) Minutes

The Minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meeting of the Council held on 21 November 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

(ii) Urgent Decisions

No urgent decisions were reported.

(iii) Mayor's Announcements

With deep regret, the Mayor referred to the recent death of Mr Andrew Bennett who had served as the MP for Denton and Reddish between 1983 and 2005, and as the MP for Stockport North between 1974 and 1983.

The Mayor invited all those present to stand in silence as a mark of respect to the memory of Mr Bennett.

The Mayor then reported that during the festive period, she had attended a number of carol services and celebratory events. More recently, the Mayor stated that she had hosted an event in recognition of the Council receiving the Ministry of Defence's Gold Award that recognised the Council was a Defence and Armed Forces friendly employer. The event had been attended by members of the Armed Forces Covenant Steering Group, including our voluntary and community partners, as well as elected members. The Mayor extended her thanks and congratulations to all those involved.

(iv) Declarations of Interest

Councillors and officers were invited to declare any interests which they had in any of the items on the summons for the meeting.

The Mayor reported that a personal interest would automatically be registered for those members who were members of a trade union with regard to Summons Item 8(ii) – Motion - Support for the Employment Rights Bill’.

2. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

(i) Public Question Time

Members of the public were invited to put questions to the Mayor and councillors on matters within the powers and duties of the Council.

Four public questions were submitted as follows:-

- Relating to who within the Council had been tasked to complete due diligence on the science behind the Council’s net zero policy.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change & Environment (Councillor Mark Roberts) responded that the overwhelming consensus among climate scientists, based on decades of research and vast data analysis, confirmed that human activities, primarily the burning of fossil fuels, were driving increased levels of carbon dioxide, leading to global warming. It was further stated that the efforts behind Net Zero were aimed at reducing harm from climate change while fostering innovation in clean technologies that could improve everyone’s quality of life. Finally, it was stated that the Council’s policies were built on rigorous evidence and were subject to public accountability through its scrutiny processes.

- Relating to what actions were being taken by the Council to resolve drainage issues on Glandon Drive, Cheadle Hulme.

The Cabinet Member for Parks, Highways & Transport Services (Councillor Grace Baynham) responded that across the country, existing infrastructure was proving unable to cope with the increasing levels of rainfall, and in Stockport rivers, streams, culverts and underground water drainage systems could not cope with the amount of water that fell. With regard to the specific issue on Glandon Drive, it was stated that the Council previously carried out investigations and it was not believed that the flooding occurred due to the issues within the Council maintained gullies, but rather it was the result of the water flowing through the United Utilities main drain from surrounding streets and finding the lowest point at which to discharge.

It was further stated that the council reported the matter to United Utilities in January 2024. United Utilities inspected and responded in March 2024, reporting that they had failed to identify a defect, however the Council would continue to work with United Utilities at this location to try and find a solution.

- Relating to what plans the Council had to alleviate congestion in the east of Stockport following the decision to no longer pursue the development of the A6-M60 by-pass.

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The Leader of the Council (Councillor Mark Hunter) responded that on 21 March 2022, the Council Meeting had debated a motion regarding the A6-M60 by-pass and voted not to reaffirm its commitment to developing a business case for the road. Councillor Hunter noted that during that debate, concerns had been expressed in relation to the environmental impact that the development of the road might have. It was further noted that at the time, there was no funding available for major road building schemes to tackle congestion and it did not seem likely that the current government would change that approach.

The Cabinet Member for Parks, Highways & Transport Services (Councillor Grace Baynham) further responded that improved public transport had to form part of any solution to congestion in the area, including the potential for the use of tram-train technologies to improve services on existing rail infrastructure.

- Relating to the covid vaccination programme and what guarantees the Council could provide that those injured by the vaccines would not have recourse to compensation from the Council.

The Leader of the Council (Councillor Mark Hunter) responded that he rejected the basis on which the question had been asked and that he stood proudly in support of healthcare professionals and NHS colleagues in their work to offer residents of Stockport the protection against COVID -19 that the vaccines provided.

The Leader of the Opposition (Councillor David Meller) further responded that he supported the statement made by the Leader of the Council and that he confirmed that the vaccines had been subjected to properly conducted trials.

A further three public questions were submitted where the questioners were not in attendance at the meeting, and in accordance with the Code of Practice, the Chief Executive was requested to respond to the questioners in writing.

(ii) Petitions and Presentations

Petition

One petition was submitted on behalf of the residents of Glandon Drive signed by 12 signatories requesting that the Council take urgent action to address the unmaintained blocked drain on Glandon Drive Cheadle Hulme.

RESOLVED – That the petition be referred to the Director of Place Management and the Cabinet Member for Parks, Highways & Transport Services for a formal response.

Presentation

There were no presentations.

(iii) Joint Authorities

(a) Greater Manchester Police, Crime & Fire Panel

There were no questions in relation to the business of the Greater Manchester Police, Crime & Fire Panel.

(b) Greater Manchester Combined Authority

Councillor Grace Baynham responded to questions in relation to the business of the Bee Network Committee.

There were no questions in relation to the business of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority or the Greater Manchester Waste & Recycling Committee.

3. POLICY FRAMEWORK AND BUDGET

(i) Treasury Management Strategy and Annual Investment Strategy Mid-Year Review Report 2024/25

The Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources (Councillor Jilly Julian) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing a mid-year review of the council's Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy for 2024/25 approved by council on 22 February 2024 which had been prepared in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountancy (CIPFA) Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Services.

RESOLVED - (1) That the report and the treasury activity in the first half of the financial year be noted.

(2) That approval be given to the Treasury Management Strategy, Annual Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy for 2024/25 previously approved in February 2024, continuing to be followed considering the forecasts and conclusion set out in the report.

(3) That the revised interest rate forecasts for PWLB rates over the short and medium term which will drive the council's long-term borrowing strategies going forward be noted.

(ii) Business Rates and Council Tax Discounts Annual Review

The Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources (Councillor Jilly Julian) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) detailing proposed changes to the scheme of local discounts and exemptions against liability for Business Rates and Council Tax.

RESOLVED - (1) That it be agreed that private schools should not be eligible for discretionary rate relief as a non-profit organisation, due to the potential cost to the council which is currently estimated at £0.651m.

(2) That it be agreed that the Business Rates Discretionary Relief Policy for 2025-26 at Appendix 1 is endorsed.

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- (3) That it be agreed that discretionary Business Rates relief under Section 47 of the LGFA 1988 will normally be awarded from the start of the financial year in which the application is made or the date the business became liable for rates, if later. Consideration will be given to backdating relief from the start of the previous financial year where valid reasons are provided for not applying earlier. Awards given under Section 44a on partly occupied premises or Section 49 on the grounds of hardship, will be determined on a case-by-case basis as appropriate.
- (4) That it be agreed that discretionary Business Rates relief will normally expire at the end of the financial year in which the award is made or cease from the date liability ends (whichever is the earliest), except where it is granted based on the status of an organisation which is unlikely to change.
- (5) That it be agreed that where a business has a change in circumstances, two months' notice will be given to reduce or revoke a discretionary rates relief award, effective from the date the change occurs.
- (6) That it be agreed that any new applications for Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Relief should be backdated to April 2023 where eligibility exists from that date, in line with para 3.3.3.
- (7) That it be agreed that the council continues with its existing empty property discount and premium scheme for 2025-26, as shown at paragraph 4.2.1.
- (8) That it be noted that the decision to charge a Council Tax premium on second homes from April 2025 was agreed at the council meeting of 11 January 2024 and therefore a new decision is not required on this aspect of the scheme for 2025-26.
- (9) That it be agreed that exceptions to both the long-term empty and second home premiums are applied in line with published statutory guidance and that a localised policy will be developed during 2025-26 based on learning throughout the year.
- (10) That it be agreed that any Council Tax liability for care leavers up to the age of 25 be reduced to zero for 2025-26.
- (11) That it be agreed that Stockport's Council Tax Support scheme is maintained for the financial year 2025-26 as detailed at Appendix 3.
- (12) That it be agreed that the Council Tax discretionary fund is set at £0.2m for 2025-26, supporting customers facing financial difficulty, with no alternative means.
- (13) That delegation is given to the Director of Finance in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources to review and adjust the fund during 2025-26, capped at a total fund of £0.385m if required, to support the council's ongoing cost-of-living response.
- (14) That delegation is given to the Director of Finance in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources to consider any subsequent Government announcements that impact on Business Rates and Council Tax reductions for 2025-26, and to decide what changes should be made aligned to legislation.

(15) That it be agreed to set the Council's 2025-26 Council Tax Taxbase at 99,339.6 Band D equivalent dwellings.

4. GENERAL BUSINESS

(i) Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations

The Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources (Councillor Jilly Julian) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) detailing proposed polling arrangements for Stockport in order to inform the Council Meeting's determination of polling districts, polling places and polling stations for forthcoming elections.

RESOLVED – That approval be given to the proposed polling arrangements for Stockport as detailed in the report.

(ii) Children & Families Scrutiny Committee- Appointment of Co-opted Member (Parent Governor Representative)

RESOLVED – That approval be given to appointment of Chris Read as a Co-opted Member (Parent Governor Representative) on the Children & Families Scrutiny Committee.

(iii) Nominations for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor 2025/26

RESOLVED - (1) That Councillor Kerry Waters be invited to allow her name to be submitted to the Annual Council Meeting for election to the Office of Mayor for the Metropolitan Borough of Stockport for the year 2025/2026.

(2) That Councillor Gary Lawson be invited to allow his name to be submitted to the Annual Council Meeting for the appointment to the Office of Deputy Mayor for the Metropolitan Borough of Stockport for the year 2025/26.

5. LEADER'S REPORT AND CABINET QUESTION TIME

(i) Cabinet Business

The Leader of the Council; the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Climate Change & Environment; and the Cabinet Members for Communities, Culture & Sport; Finance & Resources; Health & Adult Social Care; Parks, Highways & Transport Services made a report on the conduct of Cabinet business since the last Council Meeting.

(ii) Questions

The Leader of the Council; the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Climate Change & Environment; and the Cabinet Members for Children, Families & Education; Communities, Culture & Sport; Finance & Resources; Health & Adult Social Care; and Parks, Highways & Transport Services answered questions and responded to comments relating to the business of the Cabinet in accordance with Council Meeting Procedure Rule 11.

(iii) Minutes

The Mayor declared the Minutes of the Cabinet held on 10 December 2024 (copies of which had been circulated) and the record of executive decisions taken (copies of which were circulated) since the last meeting of the Council to be duly received.

6. SCRUTINY

(i) Scrutiny Business

There were no reports from the Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees on the conduct of their business since the last Council Meeting.

(ii) Questions

There were no questions relating to the business of the Scrutiny Committees in accordance with Council Meeting Procedure Rule 11.

(iii) Minutes

The Mayor declared the Minutes of the following Scrutiny Committees (copies of which had been circulated with the Summons) to be duly received:-

Adult Social Care & Health – 28 November 2024

Children & Families – 27 November 2024

Communities & Transport – 25 November 2024

Corporate, Resource Management & Governance – 26 November 2024

Economy, Regeneration & Climate Change – 28 November 2024

7. ORDINARY AND AREA COMMITTEES

(i) To receive a report from the Chairs of the Planning & Highways Regulation and Licensing, Environment & Safety Committees on the conduct of their business since the last Council Meeting.

There were no reports from the Chairs of the Planning and Highways Regulation, Licensing, Environment and Safety or Audit Committees on the conduct of their business since the last Council Meeting.

(ii) Questions

There were no questions relating to the business of the Ordinary, Area and Ward Committees in accordance with Council Meeting Procedure Rule 11.

(iii) Minutes

The Mayor declared the Minutes of the following Ordinary and Area Committees (copies of which had been circulated with the Summons) to be duly received:-

Ordinary Committees

Appointments – 15 November 2024
Audit – 20 November 2024
Health & Wellbeing Board – 27 November 2024
Licensing, Environment & Safety – 13 November and 18 December 2024
Planning & Highways Regulation – 14 November and 19 December 2024
Standards – 9 December 2024

Area Committees

Bramhall & Cheadle Hulme South – 5 December 2024
Central Stockport – 5 December 2024
Cheadle – 3 December 2024
Heatons & Reddish – 2 December 2024
Marple – 4 December 2024
Stepping Hill – 3 December 2024
Werneth – 2 December 2024

Ward Committees and Area Sub-Committees

Brookfield Park Shiers Family Trust Sub-Committee – 19 November 2024

8. MOTIONS - NOTICE OF WHICH HAVE BEEN GIVEN UNDER COUNCIL MEETING PROCEDURE RULE 12

(i) Expressing disappointment at government failure to compensate the WASPI Women

RESOLVED - This Council Meeting reasserts its support for the WASPI women, as set out in a motion passed at the meeting on 5th April 2018 and regrets the decision of the Labour government to ignore an independent ombudsman's assessment that compensation should be paid to them.

(ii) Support for the Employment Rights Bill

MOVED AND SECONDED – This Council notes that the proposed Employment Rights Bill introduced by the Government marks an important step forward in improving conditions for working people across the country.

Key elements of the bill include:

- Ending exploitative zero-hour contracts and ensuring all workers are paid fairly.
- Giving workers stronger rights to join a trade union and have proper representation.
- Bringing in better protections against unfair dismissal, so everyone has rights from their first day on the job.
- Improving access to sick pay and making statutory parental leave more supportive for families.
- Cracking down on exploitative practices in the gig economy to ensure fair treatment and secure work for all.

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Local authorities have a duty to set the standard by championing fair employment practices in their own workforce and supporting efforts to improve workers' rights across the board.

In Stockport, working people are the backbone of our communities and local economy. Stronger employment rights will make a real difference to thousands of workers here, giving them more security, stability, and fairness at work.

The Employment Rights Bill is a vital step to ensure workplaces treat people fairly, offering the protections working people deserve while also helping to build a more productive economy.

This Council resolves to:

- (1) Publicly support the Employment Rights Bill and write to all MPs representing Stockport urging them vote in favour of the bill at its final reading.
- (2) Commit to continue backing the real living wage for all Stockport Council employees
- (3) Work with local trade unions, businesses, and community groups to raise awareness of how this Bill can support workers and improve workplace standards in Stockport.

AMENDMENT MOVED AND SECONDED - This Council notes that the proposed Employment Rights Bill introduced by the Government marks an important step forward in improving conditions for working people across the country.

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This council meeting respects the constructive, cross-party efforts to strengthen the Bill in parliament by incorporating further measures, particularly for carers, parents and those on sick pay, as well as including more detail and clarity about the support for smaller businesses.

This Council resolves to:

(1) Publicly support the Employment Rights Bill and the constructive efforts to improve it, and write to all MPs representing Stockport urging them vote in favour of the bill at its final reading.

(2) Commit to continue backing the real living wage for all Stockport Council Employees.

(3) Work with local trade unions, businesses, and community groups to raise awareness of how this Bill can support workers and improve workplace standards in Stockport.

For the amendment, 57, against 1,

AMENDMENT CARRIED

It was then

RESOLVED (57 for, 1 against) - This Council notes that the proposed Employment Rights Bill introduced by the Government marks an important step forward in improving conditions for working people across the country.

Key elements of the bill include:

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(iii) Introducing Stockport Scam Safe Standards to Tackle Rising Levels of On-Line Fraud

RESOLVED - This Council Meeting notes that

- scams are not a minor inconvenience but a crime that can cause emotional distress, misery and in many cases financial loss. As well as the financial losses, this crime can cause severe psychological harm to victims. The best way to protect against fraud is to prevent it from happening in the first place. There is opportunity to further advance and educate residents across the borough on scam awareness and to help residents across Stockport become the first line of defence against scammers.
- that the council should do more to support residents in Stockport to prevent them becoming victims of fraud.

This council therefore resolves to:

(1) Recommend that all councillors undertake the certified 'Friend against Scams' training run by National Trading Standards. This will ensure all councillors are equipped to support our residents on the front line of fighting back against the scammers and educating people on how to avoid being scammed. The training is available to everyone and educates people on how to protect themselves and their loved ones against scams and most of all to raise awareness throughout their community.

(2) Because of the magnitude of the problem and the need to do more to protect local people, it is agreed that the council sets up an all-party working group to develop a set of Stockport Scam Safe standards. This could involve certification standards and a voluntary scheme for administrators of social media groups to register when they have undertaken the Friends Against Scams training, providing assurance for users and ensuring administrators are committed to working to prevent fraud.

(iv) Flooding in Stockport - recent events and resilience against future incidents

MOVED AND SECONDED - This Council notes:

- The catastrophic flooding that occurred in several Stockport locations earlier this month
- Increasing rainfall levels and the limitations of the existing drainage system and other infrastructure
- The likelihood of similar or heavier rainfall in the future and the need to prepare for this through robust resilience and adaptation measures.

In Stockport, 2025 began with unprecedented flooding. Homes and business fittings were ruined, a Reddish Vale bridge and brand-new gyms were destroyed, people had to be evacuated from their homes, parked cars were submerged, the Trans Pennine Trail was impassable, and major roads were cut off. All this was caused by heavy rainfall and resulted in water courses and grids overflowing onto surrounding land.

This was not an isolated occurrence, and we owe it to our residents, businesses, and investors to do what we can to avoid similar or worse occurrences in the future.

The Climate Centre UK cites flooding as a consequence of our failure to reach net zero and states that we now need to adapt and prepare. The Government recognised this when, in September it set up a Floods Resilience Taskforce to speed up preparation and resilience and improve coordination between central and local government and emergency services.

- Having declared a climate emergency this council has taken some action to offset or mitigate the effects of climate change. However, recent events demonstrate that stronger and targeted resilience measures are needed.
- Under Section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 Stockport Council has a duty to investigate flood events that occur within its area. The most recent flood investigation report was published in 2020. The borough wide and location focussed recommendations made then, assuming we have adhered to them, are obviously not adequate for today, and need to be more robust.
- This council has been set an ambitious home building target by the government and is currently working on a Stockport Plan for the next 15 years. Development sites in possible future flood risk areas, have implications for new and existing buildings.
- The Council needs to plan for worsening weather and recognise that areas not previously identified as at risk may well be in the future. Current rainfall levels cannot be used as indicators.

To this end, this council resolves to request the Chief Executive to ensure that:

- The council recognises the increased flooding threats and takes more radical steps to adapt and become better prepared, taking into account predictions for future weather patterns. This may involve innovative or natural solutions (for example, deliberately leaving some areas undeveloped, or creating basins, that floodwater can flow into).
- Stockport's possible risk areas are identified and shown in the emerging Stockport Plan, and that no development takes place on "at risk" sites until resilience work has been completed, to protect new and existing buildings.

AMENDMENT MOVED AND SECONDED - This Council notes:

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- Stockport's possible risk areas are identified and shown in the emerging Stockport Plan, and that no development takes place on "at risk" sites until resilience work has been completed, to protect new and existing buildings
- An immediate and comprehensive review of the existing grids and gullies maintenance programme should be brought to scrutiny to assess its effectiveness in mitigating

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excess rainfall and flooding. This review should evaluate whether the current three-year cleaning and maintenance schedule is adequately reducing the impact of heavy rainfall and flooding. It should identify areas—such as those historically or regularly affected by flooding—where improvements are needed to better protect the borough. Recommendations should then be implemented swiftly.

AMENDMENT CARRIED

It was then

RESOLVED - This Council notes:

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- Stockport's possible risk areas are identified and shown in the emerging Stockport Plan, and that no development takes place on "at risk" sites until resilience work has been completed, to protect new and existing buildings
- An immediate and comprehensive review of the existing grids and gullies maintenance programme should be brought to scrutiny to assess its effectiveness in mitigating excess rainfall and flooding. This review should evaluate whether the current three-year cleaning and maintenance schedule is adequately reducing the impact of heavy rainfall and flooding. It should identify areas—such as those historically or regularly affected by flooding— where improvements are needed to better protect the borough. Recommendations should then be implemented swiftly.

The meeting closed at 9.50 pm