

COMMUNITIES & TRANSPORT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting: 20 January 2025

At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

Councillor Joe Barratt (Chair) in the chair; Councillor Matt Wynne (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Geoff Abell, Jon Byrne, Steve Gribbon, Dominic Hardwick, Huma Khan,
Rachel Wise and Micheala Meikle.

1. MINUTES

The Minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meeting held on 25 November 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PUBLIC INTEREST TEST

The Chair invited the Committee to consider whether to exclude the public and press from the meeting during consideration of Agenda Item 8 – ‘Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Fund Procurement Report’ as an appendix to the report contained information ‘not for publication’.

RESOLVED – That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of Agenda Item 8 – ‘Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Fund Procurement Report’ as an appendix to the report contained information ‘not for publication’ by virtue of Category 3 ‘Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority)’ as set out in the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

3. 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 interest was declared:-

Personal Interest

Officer

Interest

| | |
|------------|---|
| Mark Glynn | Agenda Item 6 – ‘Walking and Cycling Update’ as Chair of the Totally Local Company. |
|------------|---|

4. CALL-IN

(i) **Call-in of Executive Decision CMDHPL166 - 'Discretionary Grit Bin Report'**

The Scrutiny Committee was informed that on 18 December 2024 the Cabinet Member for Parks, Highways and Transport Services had given approval to:-

- (1) The proposed separate arrangement for the provision of discretionary community grit bins on the highway that are outside the scope of the borough-wide risk-based approach taken in the Council's Winter Service Policy and Plan.
- (2) The Council's Policy and Plan being reviewed in the Summer / Autumn of 2025, prior to the next winter season.

The Chair reported that the decision of the Cabinet Member for Parks, Highways and Transport Services had been called in by Councillors Asa Caton, Leah Taylor and Matt Wynne.

Councillors Asa Caton and Matt Wynne attended the meeting and outlined their reasons for calling-in the decision, namely that they were concerned about the amount of funding required for the installation of grit bins; being £3,000 per bin. They stated that the report contained no context setting out how the figure of £3,000 had been arrived at. They further stated that they had examined the costs of installing and filling grit bins at other local authorities, along with checking the prices of bins and grit, and found that those costs were significantly lower than the amount quoted for grit bins in Stockport. Councillors Caton and Wynne stated that they wanted to ensure that the Council and Stockport's residents were getting value for money.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- Councillors Caton and Wynne confirmed that, other than the costs, they were satisfied with the policy that ward members could use their discretionary highways budget for the installation of grit bins. However, that the wider grit bin policy required to be reviewed as it did not meet the requirements for grit across the borough. It was also noted that, reports containing costs did not contain detail about how those costs were arrived at.
- Members queried whether it might be possible for residents to refill grit bins themselves at a cheaper cost. In response, it was reported that grit bins might require multiple refills per year, for example, if there was more than one cold snap or where rain washed grit away.

The Cabinet Member for Parks, Highways and Transport Services (Councillor Grace Baynham), the Director of Place Management (Mark Glynne) and the Assistant Director for Infrastructure (Jamie Birtles) attended the meeting to respond to councillors' questions.

It was explained that the Council's Grit Bin Policy had determined the sites where grit bins were placed based on a risk assessment.

At the Council Meeting on 21 November 2024, members had resolved that:-

- The relevant Cabinet Member arranges for the review of the Borough's current winter policy around grit bins forthwith and amend it so that grit bin requests are dealt with through a common sense approach and that Ward Members can use the Highways budget delegated to them as they see fit on priorities residents set.
- This review takes place imminently before freezing temperatures are upon us.

- All Members are updated by December 2024 on this to allow wards to select locations for grit bins outside of the risk-based approach.

The new approach was un-funded and the council was required to cover the costs of additional grit bins. The cost for a discretionary bin and five years maintenance of the bin had been set at £3,000 in advance, to be charged to the Ward Delegated Budget.

The factors determining the cost included ensuring that discretionary grit bins would be in place for a minimum of five years; the council did not wish to undermine the trust of residents by removing grit bins. It also included the cost of the grit bin at approximately £350, the cost to refill a grit bin, which incorporated the cost of the grit itself, along with cost of the driver. It was not known how frequently grit bins would need to be refilled.

It was acknowledged that the costs of installing a grit bin and five years of refills and maintenance might be more or less than £3,000, however, that was the estimate at which the council had arrived. The costs would be reviewed and revised if necessary.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- Clarification was sought about whether the council had looked into costs for grit bins charged by other councils. It was reported that the council had not done so. It had arrived at the figure of £3,000 over five years taking into account the materials cost per year for purchase, replacement, degradation and storage. It also included the costs of labour, along with the instalment and removal of bins and it took account of inflation over a five-year period.
- It was further reported that the council's charges did not necessarily reflect the commercial costs. Furthermore, the council did not wish to provide a bin with a single annual refill and no additional top-ups; the public would expect the bins to be refilled as necessary.
- It was confirmed that, over time, the costs for the grit bins would reduce as there would not be a requirement to install bins again.
- Members commented that the cost of installing one bin was almost one third of the total annual highways delegated budget.
- It was stated that the costs related to grit bins had not been set at a rate to discourage their installation; the council had to cover its costs and it had looked at cost savings.
- Members enquired about whether the costs for a bin could be spread over two years rather than one. In response, it was stated that the council could not hold a future administration to a decision made by a previous councillor.
- Members enquired about whether the council could fund a grit bin, but not refills. In response, it was stated that such a policy could bring the council into disrepute. It was further stated that such a position would also involve costs, with officer time spent negotiating with local residents about grit bins.
- It was agreed that a review of the council's gritting policy, including the views of residents and members would be useful.
- Clarification was sought about whether it might be possible for funding to be returned to the ward highways delegated budget. In response, it was reported that there was an inherent risk, in that, future weather could not be predicted and that had been the basis of the council's risk-based approach to grit bins.

It was then

RESOLVED – (5 for) That no further action be taken.

(ii) To consider any further call-in items (if any)

There were no further call-in items to consider.

5. CABINET RESPONSE: RESPONDING TO 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) providing further detail on the budget change proposals, taking into consideration the feedback received to date. The appendix to the report outlined the budget proposals being considered by cabinet to address our financial challenges and balance the rising cost of delivering services to the people in our communities who need it most.

The Cabinet Member for Parks, Highways and Transport Services (Councillor Grace Baynham) and the Cabinet Member for Communities, Culture & Sport (Councillor Helen Foster-Grime) attended the meeting to respond to councillors' questions.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:

- It was recognised that smaller teams would result in fewer staff to provide cover. Members asked what impact that was likely to have on place-based services such as Family Hubs. In response, it was stated that enquiries had been made about staff joint-working to ensure the protection of staff and efforts were underway to fill vacancies in place-based roles.
- It was also reported that services would be delivered in a more streamlined and joined-up way going forward including delivering a single one-stop neighbourhood approach.
- The single induction programme was coming to an end and this would be replaced by another programme which was currently in development, whereby all of the neighbourhood workforce would undergo the same training. This would ensure residents received a similar level of support or signposting no matter which service they approached.

RESOLVED – That the report and proposals presented that were relevant to the committee's remit be noted.

6. WALKING AND CYCLING UPDATE REPORT

The Director of Place Management submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) advising Councillors on the progress of the delivery of the Walking and Cycling Strategy and the wider commitment to active travel in 2024.

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 thanked officers for their work in securing funding for the creation of active travel schemes, including the helix ramp at Stockport Interchange, the A34 network and the Romiley scheme.
- The report set out Greater Manchester's ambition for 50 per cent of people to use public transport or active travel to commute to work by 2040; members stated that to achieve such a goal, more schemes and more integration of schemes was needed.
- Members stated that the safety of women and girls would be incorporated into the overall ambition to increase the use of public transport and active travel.
- In relation to mapping active travel routes with socio-economic duty, it was reported that the council would focus on making active travel routes a network in order to link different parts of the borough together. Members were requested to provide suggestions for locations of active travel routes.
- Clarification was sought about the proposed cycling scheme which would run parallel to the A6. It was reported that there was not a scheme currently in development but that there was a potential for future development through Mayoral Funding.
- Members requested further information on Access Controls at a future meeting of this Scrutiny Committee.
- Members welcomed the work undertaken to encourage children to engage with walking and cycling, which should help to foster lifelong habits.
- Members commented that, although the report had not identified any potential sites for pedestrian crossings with count-down signals, the road crossing underneath the bridge adjacent to Asda in the town centre would be a potential candidate for the use of a count-down signal.
- It was reported that there was an ongoing GM project looking at improving urban pathways.
- In terms of the maintenance of active travel schemes, it was reported that there were two elements of funding, the capital funding for the development and implementation of a scheme and the revenue funding which was used for ongoing maintenance. Additional maintenance funding was required as there was likely to be an increased maintenance liability going forward. The council was allocated a maintenance block annually for funding which was required to cover all transport and highways schemes across the borough including surfaces, draining and structure repair. It also had a separate internal revenue scheme for potholes and patching. Decisions on maintenance was made on the basis of risk assessments.
- The funding for the majority of the borough's transport schemes was obtained from TfGM.
- Members suggested that the safety of the borough's cycle routes should be advertised to its residents. It was also suggested that an increase in maintenance of cycle routes would encourage more residents to use them.
- Members referred to schemes within the report which had been marked as complete. One in particular, the Offerton to Stockport scheme had been marked as completed but was, in fact, awaiting completion.
- The council had considered the introduction of cargo bikes, however a funding stream would be required to introduce them.
- In relation to pavement parking obstructing cycling lanes, it was reported that the council was awaiting further powers to deal with that problem and in some instances, traffic regulation orders (TROs) were required. In the meantime the council had attempted to design schemes which mitigated that issue.

- It was reported that, should the government introduce legislation to ban pavement parking, TROs would be required to allow for pavement parking rather than to ban it. In those circumstances, it was prudent to await an expected imminent government decision on pavement parking rather than introduce TROs now to ban pavement parking.
- Members asked about the scope for introducing Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) technology for the borough's school streets, rather than relying on volunteers. In response it was reported that different sets of guidance on the use of ANPR had been issued by the government and TfGM. The use of that technology was under consideration by the council.
- Members commented that the council and wider GM ambitions ought to be politically bold in their ambitions for active travel within the region.
- Barriers to accessing active travel should be removed without delay.
- In terms of 'mini Holland' schemes, which use Dutch-style infrastructure, it was reported that those are difficult to deliver with a consensus among the local population.
- Members asked whether the council had any initiatives on sustainable travel to school. In response it was stated that the council would endeavour to encourage schools to think about sustainable travel.
- It was reported that the introduction of a pedestrian crossing at the A6 at Interchange Park would be in place in the near future.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

7. 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 Access Controls.
- A review of outcomes of schemes funded by the Delegated Highways Budget.
- An update on the Cultural Development Fund.

Item 'Not for Publication'

8. LOCAL ELECTRIC VEHICLE INFRASTRUCTURE (LEVI) FUND PROCUREMENT REPORT

The Director of Place Management submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) advising Councillors on progress with the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund (LEVI) and requesting permission to authorise Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) to undertake the preparatory procurement arrangements that need to be

Communities & Transport Scrutiny Committee - 20 January 2025

undertaken to deliver the LEVI Programme on behalf of Stockport Council in accordance with Transport for Greater Manchester's existing Constitutional arrangements.

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

Members commented on this report.

(NOTE: This report contained information 'Not for Publication' that had been circulated to members of the Scrutiny Committee only).

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.18 pm