

Public Document Pack



**TRAFFORD
COUNCIL**

QUESTIONS FOR COUNCIL

Date: Wednesday, 17 July 2024

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<p>This is an opportunity for Members of Council to ask the Mayor, Members of the Executive or the Chairs of any Committee or Sub-Committee a question on notice under Procedure Rule 10.2.</p>	

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Questions Submitted for Council – 17 July 2024

Question 1 - Submitted by Councillor Eckersley

“I have spoken with residents across Bowdon Ward in recent months about both the driving and pedestrian safety conditions on South Downs Road (between Pheasant Rise and Greenside Drive). This road is a heavily used road that connects Hale to Bowdon, however it is very winding and very narrow with extremely narrow footpaths and no footpath at all in some sections. I have received far too many reports of near misses of both vehicles and pedestrians along this strip of road, with many being near misses of children walking to and from the schools in the area. I understand that the capital budget has been set and is limited, however I implore the Council to take proactive measures to improve both motorist and pedestrian safety on this section of road. There have been proposals for 20 mph signs to be installed, but we all know these are ineffective at best and there are numerous signs along this section of road already.

I ask, will the Council take proactive measures to install physical traffic calming measures, such as full width speed humps at appropriate locations on this section of road, to calm traffic and improve the safety of motorists, cyclist's and pedestrians?”

Response

South Downs Road is one of 101 locations on the 20mph list of priorities. South Downs in comparison to other roads with similar concerns sits currently at 24 on this list.

Over last five-year period 1/1/19 to 31/12/23, there has been 1 recorded injury collision. On 18th January 2021 and it was at the junction with Ashley Mill Lane North (cyclist enters South Downs Road).

A number of interventions in previous years have been implemented including advisory 20mph signage and the signage has recently been reviewed with some relocations and enhancements to signage being proposed.

20mph limits are most appropriate for roads where average speeds are already low, and the guidance suggests below 24mph. The layout and use of the road must also give the clear impression that a 20mph speed or below is the most appropriate.

Due to the size and age of the road network the Council receives many requests to introduce highway improvements such as traffic calming, new pedestrian crossings, better footways and cycleways etc across the borough to improve safety and reduce traffic speeds. In addition to the capital cost to install highway improvements, the introduction of traffic calming measures such as road humps requires quite a lengthy statutory process of design, consultation, public advertising and consideration of any resulting representations and the likely funding needed for South Downs Road would be considerable due to the length of the road. For this reason, projects such as this have to be prioritised against all other pressures for improvements across the borough and entered into the highways capital programme once funding is identified.

Any installation of full width road humps or other suitable traffic calming measures on South Downs Road will therefore be considered as part of the development of the annual highways capital programme but will have to be assessed alongside other roads that are also on the list for potential measures.

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Question 2 - Submitted by Councillor Brophy

“What is the process in Trafford for monitoring and eliminating invasive and non-native plant species such as Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam and Giant Hogweed.

Recent changes in legislation have given local authorities the power to take legal action, where necessary, against the owners of private land where non-native invasive plants like Japanese Knotweed are invading neighbouring properties.

Japanese knotweed

Japanese knotweed grows pretty much anywhere and can block footpaths, damage concrete, tarmac, flood defences and the stability of river banks.

Japanese knotweed is probably the most invasive plant in Britain and is scheduled under the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act, so that it is an offence to plant or cause it to grow in the wild. In addition under the Environment Protection Act (1990) Japanese knotweed is classified as ‘controlled waste’ and must be disposed of at a licensed landfill site in accordance with the Environment Protection Act (Duty of Care) Regulations 1991. If it spreads onto a neighbour's land, you could be taken to court.

Giant hogweed

Giant hogweed is a species with both occupational health and environmental problems. When giant hogweed sap comes into contact with skin, it reacts with sunlight and causes chemical skin burns. Giant hogweed sap becomes more toxic as the year progresses and the plant is exposed to more sunlight.

Himalayan balsam

Himalayan balsam is from the Himalayas and was introduced here in 1839. It now an invasive weed of riverbanks and ditches, where it prevents native species from growing.

I note on the Trafford website that only Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed are mentioned in a section that includes information about High Hedges?”

Response

The process for monitoring of Japanese knotweed on Trafford Land when reported by members of the public or found on site by operational teams, is firstly to register/record the presence of Japanese Knotweed and then to proceed with treating through Chemical control. As a council we mainly inject the Knotweed with herbicide, first injection where practical will take place in May followed by a second application in mid- late summer and then check again the following spring.

The process of monitoring applies to Giant Hogweed and Himalayan Balsam, although the methods of treatment will differ from Japanese Knotweed.

It's not illegal for the landowner to have Japanese Knotweed on their land and they do not need to notify anyone about Japanese Knotweed on their land. The landowner is not obliged to remove or treat Japanese Knotweed, but the landowner must not allow Japanese Knotweed to spread onto adjacent land. On receipt of enquiries regarding concerns of Japanese Knotweed spreading from adjacent land, the Council firstly sign posts the customer to the councils web site [Invasive plant species \(trafford.gov.uk\)](http://trafford.gov.uk) advising the customer to try and resolve informally with their neighbour.

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If the Japanese Knotweed is having a detrimental effect of a persistent or continuing nature on the quality of life of those in the locality and an officer has to visit the site, guidance will be given to the landowner on how to prevent harmful weeds and invasive plant species. The guidance explains how the landowner could risk a fine or prosecution if they do not deal with or dispose of invasive plants and harmful weeds properly, and how the Council may consider serving a Community Protection Notice to require the landowner to remove the Japanese knotweed under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

All the above applies to Giant Hogweed and Himalayan Balsam

Question 3 - Submitted by Councillor Duncan

"I have received several reports of concern about children crossing the Moss Lane/Harboro Road junction in Sale. The 'lollipop attendant' role at this junction seems to have disappeared since covid, leaving children to navigate this tricky crossroads alone. I fully support the council's consultation on red routes in Stretford and the proposal for a red route around Old Trafford during match times to manage traffic. Would the Council extend this measure promptly to also include 'school hot spot crossing areas?'"

Response

I welcome Cllr Duncan's support for the Red Route scheme but as the funding for this scheme is from TfGM, and as it's in relation to that specific scheme, it will not be feasible to extend this particular measure as requested.

The crossing point has been vacant for over 12 months and we are continuously advertising for SCP's but unfortunately we have not been able to fill the vacancy. This site has been highlighted as a potential lighted crossing.

Officers from the SCP service, or our Traffic team can be contacted directly regarding concerns related to any specific SCP crossing points, or I am happy to pass the details on if Members wish to raise them with me.

Question 4 - Submitted by Councillor Ennis

"In November last year – by cross party agreement – this Council voted in favour of a motion calling for feasibility assessments into the delivery of a baby box scheme across Trafford and Greater Manchester.

Eight months on, can the Executive Member for Healthy and Independent Lives give the Council an update on the progress that has been made towards the aims of that cross party motion?"

Response

Thank you for the question Councillor Ennis.

What is understood from the work undertaken after the motion in November is that no funding has been secured.

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In Trafford each year there are around 2300 births and a universal baby box at a cost of approximately £160 per box would cost Trafford around £368.00 year on year. This would equate to 8% of our Health Visitor budget. The challenge is to find funding.

The original motion suggested three-way funding between the council, GMCA and GM ICB. You may be aware that the ICB is currently carrying a deficit and is tasked in making significant savings and no budget was available at this time from any of the suggested funders.

As sustainable recurrent funding is not something that can be secured at this time, the council would be unable to fund this solely as it would impact on already stretched budgets. Also, going forward, if some funding was to be identified, then the council would have to consider the universal approach as not all families would require the box, we would look to target mums who were fleeing domestic abuse, living with multiple disadvantages or experiencing homelessness etc, where we already fund support for residents. I hope this response is helpful.

Question 5 - Submitted by Councillor Minnis

“How many Trafford children with additional needs have not attended school for over 3 months?”

Response

Zero Attendance Report for Children With EHCP and SEN Support

Establishment Type	Primary		
Sen Provision Description	Term Description		
	Autumn 23/24	Spring 23/24	Summer 23/24 as at 16/07/24
Education, Health and Care Plan	8	9	14
SEN Support	15	9	7

Establishment Type	Secondary		
Sen Provision Description	Term Description		
	Autumn 23/24	Spring 23/24	Summer 23/24 as at 16/07/24
Education, Health and Care Plan	31	25	24
SEN Support	31	36	35

Establishment Type	Special		
Sen Provision Description	Term Description		
	Autumn 23/24	Spring 23/24	Summer 23/24 as at 16/07/24
Education, Health and Care Plan	12	15	18
SEN Support	1	2	4

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Establishment Type	Pupil Referral Unit		
Sen Provision Description	Term Description		
	Autumn 23/24	Spring 23/24	Summer 23/24 as at 16/07/24
Education, Health and Care Plan	5	11	11
SEN Support	7	17	16

Question 6 - Submitted by Councillor Spencer

“Can the council confirm where it is up to regarding the roll out of the Memorandum of Understanding (previously Service Level Agreement) for Trafford’s parks. And if any parks haven’t yet received one, when they should expect it’?”

Response

As requested, we worked to put together a Parks Service Level Agreement [SLA] along with a new way of objectively assessing our parks whilst maintaining the community impact and input of our walking meetings with our Friends groups. The SLA and Memorandum of Understanding are one and the same document, it was decided after receiving feedback from friends that the document would be better received if the terminology SLA was removed and renamed as Memorandum of Understanding.

At this stage of the roll out we will be to carrying out walking meetings with a small number of parks in the use of Park Assessment Scoring template during the month of August, we recognised the need to work collaboratively with shared outcomes and by collectively assessing the park we hope for continued synergy and harmony for the greater good of the park and for those who use our parks in the long term. With the Park Assessment Scoring template being in its infant stage, we expect teething problems but with your continued valued input, we hope to create something that is easy-to-use, understand and allow us to roll out across further parks this year.

Question 7 - Submitted by Councillor Newgrosh

“Liberal Democrats have refused to sit on the Investment Strategy Board since May 2019, due to the concerns expressed at the Budget meeting in February 2020. Have Trafford Council made progress on any of the concerns raised by the Liberal Democrats previously, specifically:

1. the Council only receives expert advice from one outside source, CBRE.
2. Previously there has been a perceived conflict of interest due to CBRE representing both parties in some investments?”

Response

In July 2017 the Council approved an Asset Investment Strategy with an objective of investing in lower-risk assets that would generate an investment return which could then be used to support the cost of Council services.

The key driver behind setting up the Strategy was to provide an alternative source of income that could be used to support the cost of Council services at a time when local authorities were and continue to be under extreme financial strain.

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At the same time, an Investment Management Board (IMB) was established to oversee implementation of the Strategy with external support procured from CBRE to advise on implementation of the Strategy.

The IMB is a cross-party Board, that approves all investment decisions and sits at the heart of the Council's governance of the Investment Strategy.

Since the introduction of the Strategy the Council has achieved gross income of £80.1m which, taking account of the cost of debt and contributions to Risk Reserve, has still allowed the Council to benefit from net returns of £31.2m, accumulated a Risk Reserve of £5m at the start of 2023/24 and delivered some notable regeneration benefits including:-

- Acquisition and major redevelopment of both Stretford Mall and the Stamford Quarter, including the creation of 44,000sqft of new office space in Altrincham and proposals for 800 new homes in Stretford.
- Supported the delivery of 692 new homes with a further 757 under development.
- Created 106,000 sqft of commercial space and plans for a further 336,000 sqft.
- Supported the repurposing of the former Kellogg's HQ to accommodate new higher education facilities for our young people.

CBRE are a large organisation who have well established policies, procedures and safeguards around any perceived conflict of interests. These are designed to ensure compliance with their professional obligations in relation to both conflicts and confidentiality, as required by the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors. If any conflicts of interest arise CBRE manage them in accordance with their procedures including, if deemed necessary, information barriers between the teams involved and monitored by CBRE's compliance officer, if permitted by both clients in writing. This ensures any advice given to us is done so in both an independent and impartial manner.

All investment opportunities are subject to a two-stage due diligence process which is reported to the IMB and supported by CBRE. In addition, a range of other external specialist advice, including legal, valuation, cost consultants and planning. This advice provides a third-party, independent view of the transaction in order that the IMB can review the transaction with the benefit of a full range of advice.

To support future decision making it is proposed that an independent third-party member, with a property/investment background will be included on the IMB. This will provide the IMB with additional expertise to support effective decision-making.