

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16 MARCH 2022

PRESENT

Councillors D. Acton (in the Chair), R. Chilton (Vice-Chair), J.M. Axford, D. Butt, G. Carter, L. Dagnall, J.D. Newgrosh, K. Procter and R. Thompson

In attendance

Councillor Tom Ross	Executive Member or Finance and Governance
Graeme Bentley	Director of Finance
Adrian Fisher	Director of Growth and Regulatory Services
David Mugeridge	Head of Financial Management
John Addison	Statutory Scrutiny Officer
Robert Smithson	Corporate and Commercial Lawyer
Graeme Scott	Director of Development, Trafford Housing Trust
Andrew Adderley	Director of Property Services, Trafford Housing Trust
Mr Stevenson	Member of the Public
Alexander Murray	Governance Officer

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M. Mirza, B.G. Winstanley and D. Western.

1. MINUTES

Councillor Axford noted that several questions had been missed from the minutes and asked that these be added.

RESOLVED: That, following the addition of the additional questions, the minutes of the meeting held 12 January 2022 be agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made.

3. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

No questions were received.

4. ACM CLADDING

The Director of Development for Trafford Housing Trust (THT) introduced the item and apologised for the continued delays on the cladding replacement programme. Since the last meeting there had been an issue with the colour of the cladding received, which had led to additional delays and the scaffolding remaining on

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Pickford court. THT had an interim solution that would be put in place to enable the scaffolding to be removed before the permanent changes were made.

The Director of Development for THT acknowledged THT had not been perfect in their communications with residents during the replacement of the cladding. However, the Committee were assured that THT had done as much as they could to maintain communications and the Director of Development for THT listed the methods they had used to communicate with residents during the programme of works. The Committee were also informed that THT had only received 13 formal complaints during the past year regarding the tower blocks.

The Vice Chair asked whether the dates given would categorically be met, as there had been deadlines set before which had been missed. The Director of Development for THT responded that he could not say categorically that the works would be completed by the dates given. With the information available those dates were the expected completion dates, although unforeseen circumstances could lead to further delays.

Councillor Dagnall asked whether the insulation was removed from flats in the blocks. The Director of Property Services for THT responded that insulation had been removed for a very limited number of properties.

Mr Stevenson was given an opportunity to ask his questions which had been submitted to the Committee and THT. In addition to his questions Mr Stevenson informed the Committee of the impact the works had on the people living within the high rises, especially when there were incidents where the fire brigade were called to the flats, and explained the anxiety the delays in work had caused.

The Director of Development for THT noted and agreed with the points raised by Mr Stevenson and empathised with his experience. The Director of Development for THT was not able to give the exact details of when a piece of advice was given to THT by GMFRS due to the way the organisations worked together, where they will be on site visits or at minutes of meetings, which made it difficult to track when specific piece of advice was received. GMFRS had not served any actions against THT during the time, due to the Trust having met all the guidance that had been given.

Councillor Dagnall asked about the difficulties the trust faced in understanding, interpreting, and implementing the advice given relating to the ACM cladding and whether the trust thought of hiring an industry expert to aid in the dealing with that information. The Director of Development for THT responded that the trust had adjusted all their policies in line with the learning that they gained from GMFRS and expert advice.

Councillor Newgrosh noted the responses given by the Director of Development for THT about the communications with the fire service and was concerned that such important information was done through verbal agreements only and not backed up with written confirmation. The Director of Development for THT went through the ways that the Trust worked with the fire service. The Director of Property Services for THT added that the Trust approached the fire

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service with proposals of the work that they planned to do, such as the compartmentation which had been implemented.

Mr Stevenson reiterated that the information was not being passed onto the residents and they were living not knowing what was being done. Also stated that would like to view the risk assessments done both before and after the cladding was brought down. The Director of Development for THT stated that THT would look at how the Trust had acted at the key points in the programme and what had been done in terms of information sharing with residents. The Director of Development for THT informed the Committee that THT published relevant fire information on their website and he would go back and see what was published at the time.

The Vice Chair asked that an update on where the work was up to on the 16th of April to be sent to the Committee. The Vice Chair also asked that any further reports provided to the Committee contain more detail and be written in easier to understand language. The Director of Development for THT responded that the information would be taken back and THT would look to improve the communications shared with the Committee going forward.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the update be noted.
- 2) That a further update on the progress of the cladding replacement programme be provided on the 16th of April 2022.

5. CONTRACT PROCEDURE RULES

The Corporate and Commercial Lawyer introduced the revised Contract Procedure Rules presentation. The presentation provided an overview of the report and appendices, which had been circulated as part of the agenda. The presentation covered what the Contract Procedure Rules were, the reasons they were under review, the review process, key amendments made to the rules, and the approval journey they had to go to be adopted by Trafford and the other STAR Procurement authorities. Following the presentation, the Chair went over the recommendations in the report, which were agreed by the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the Contract Procedure Rules be noted and the recommended changes approved.

6. CARRINGTON RELIEF ROAD

The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services introduced the report circulated to the Committee in response to feedback received in January. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services went through the background of the programme, which had started in the early 2000s with the closure and subsequent opportunity to redevelop the shell refinery. Plans were made in 2012 which led to the need for improved transportation links to deal with the increased demand the plans would create. The Executive agreed in 2021 that the road network in Carrington needed to be improved and it became formal policy. In September 2021 the preferred

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route for a road within Carrington, to provide some of the needed improved transportation links, was selected.

The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services gave an overview of the budget details around the programme and the building of the road. The funding currently identified would be adequate for the planned works. However, that funding would not be adequate to deliver the completed road and the programme team were working to identify funding to address the full costs of completing the road. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services went over the sections of the report relating to the carbon footprint of the road works and recognised that one of the main disbenefits of the chosen path was that it would go through arable land.

The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services went through the next steps of the programme of works, which would include full formal consultation and the need to engage with a number of groups to inform the design and the planning application. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services suggested that the Committee could be involved in the engagement with the public, as well as opportunities around finance and the business case before they were submitted to the Executive. There were also opportunities for the Committee to be involved with the redesign of the existing motorway.

Following the overview, the Chair noted that it was going to be a long process and expressed that public engagement was a good area for the Committee to be involved in.

The Vice Chair stated that he felt the decision around the route chosen had been done with an inadequate level of consultation and it should be addressed in discussions with residents over the remainder of the project.

Councillor Axford asked how secure the funding listed within the report was. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services responded that the planning obligation funds were secured. The other areas of funding were subject to funding agreements with conditions, except for £2M of advanced funding from Homes England which had lesser conditions attached.

Councillor Axford noted the figures of other transport developments in 3.7 of the report and how the funding for a road compared to developing the Metrolink. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services responded that the examples given were to demonstrate that relatively small transport developments were still expensive and gave an example of the Poynton Relief Road, which was a 3KM stretch of road with costs around £53M. The most recent estimate for the Carrington Relief Road and the Director of Growth and Regulatory Services stated that all he could say is that the final cost would likely be more than that.

Councillor Jerrome asked about the money available through the developments being completed in the area, which amounted to around £8M. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services responded that the funding from the developments towards the programme would not impact the funding from other areas, such as conservation.

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Councillor Thompson thanked the Director of Growth and Regulatory Services for coming back to the Committee and for looking to involve the Committee in the programme. Councillor Thompson asked for the Committee be provided with a briefing on the developments prior to the consultation in October and that the information be delivered in a timely manner to enable the Committee to have an impact. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services responded that draft plans should be in place over the summer and would look to bring them to the Committee in time to influence the plans.

Councillor Dagnall noted the comments made by Councillor Wright at the previous meeting and asked whether people from across Trafford would have the opportunity to be involved in the consultation. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services responded that all feedback from residents within Trafford would be considered as would any comments received from people who lived within a reasonable distance from the road.

Councillor Newgrosh asked how the Council were ensuring they met the gunning principles when the consultation did not mention route options. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services responded that the choice given within the consultation was a genuine choice and a large number of properties had been included within the consultation exercise.

Councillor Carter agreed with the involvement of the Committee in the forthcoming consultation exercises and suggested that if it was difficult to work in with the formal meetings this could be picked up by a subgroup.

Councillor Carter asked for contentious issues to be highlighted within future reports to the Committee along with the pros, cons, recommendations, and proposed mitigations relating to those issues. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services responded that he would provide the requested details in further reports to the Committee.

Councillor Axford noted the £1M investment mentioned at 4.6 in the report for active travel infrastructure and asked for more details. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services responded that those details would be worked out as part of the further design of the road over the summer and would form part of the submission for planning permission.

Councillor Dagnall raised a question about who was going to use the units in the development and if the Clean Air Plan had proceeded as originally planned it would have impacted the use of those units. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services responded that the Clean Air Plan was delayed but would come into force in 2026 rather than 2024. While it could not be known what the final plan would be it was very likely it would have HGVs listed within it. There was still a large demand for logistics, but it was likely that greener vehicles and processes would be put in place.

Councillor Dagnall asked for assurance to be provided in further reports that the units would be used with the additional costs to providers imposed by the Clean Air Act. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services agreed with the points

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made by Councillor Dagnall and stated that he felt the Clean Air Plan would change the way the needs were met rather than reduce them.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That the Committee agreed to scrutinise the consultation exercise in October.
- 3) That contentious issues be highlighted within future reports to the Committee and include the pros, cons, recommendations, and proposed mitigations relating to those issues.
- 4) That assurance be provided in further reports that the units within the development were going to be utilised.

7. EXECUTIVE RESPONSE TO THE BUDGET SCRUTINY REPORT

The Executive Member for Finance and Governance went through the presentation circulated as part of the agenda. The Committee were informed of the work that had been done to reduce the budget gap during the year. The presentation also included details of the increased budget pressures since the budget Scrutiny exercise.

The Executive Member for Finance and Governance went over the reserves and how they were expected to be used over the course of the year. The Committee's attention was drawn to the fact that a large amount of the reserves had been COVID reserves and the Committee were asked to note they would be greatly reduced in the coming years. The Committee were assured that the reserves were being utilised to deliver further savings going forward.

The Executive Member for Finance and Governance went through the key budget risks facing the Council which included the reset of business rates and the fair funding review, the delivery of the Council's savings programme, and the increase in energy costs and inflation.

The Finance and Change Board had held a scoping meeting to discuss what the Board would deliver. The Executive Member for Finance and Governance suggested that the Committee may want to consider how they would like for the Finance and Change Board to involve Scrutiny in the work it was undertaking.

The Vice Chair thanked the Executive Member for the quality of the report and asked that additional information about the Finance and change Board be provided when the details became available.

Councillor Dagnall asked about the vacancy protocol and whether that meant the Council had not been filling vacancies. Councillor Ross responded that the council had put in a freeze to help close the budget gap. However, it had been recognised that the freeze had placed additional stress on staff. The Executive Member for Finance and Governance suggested that this may be an area the Committee wished to look at in greater detail. Councillor Dagnall noted the additional work

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staff were doing and asked if additional wellbeing support was being put in place. The Executive Member for Finance and Governance responded that wellbeing of staff was a key concern of the Executive and while there were several schemes to support and reward staff it was an ongoing task.

Councillor Carter asked for an update on the progress of the 50 lowest funded authorities in approaching the government for more funding. Councillor Carter noted in the presentation that it stated that the use of reserves was not sustainable and asked for further clarification. Councillor Carter also asked whether there was any indication as to what the staff pay awards would be for the coming years. The Executive Member for Finance and Governance responded that he had not received an update regarding the increase in funding to a fairer threshold following the request made to Michael Gove. With regards to the reserves the Council could no longer continue to use the reserves in the way they had done up until this point. Going forward use of reserves would be focused upon delivering returns on the investment rather than filling gaps in the budget. The Director of Finance informed the Committee of the expected pay award for 2021/22 and 2022/23, and the Executive Member for Finance and Governance noted that the pay award did work out as a real terms pay cut due to the rate of inflation.

Councillor Carter asked for the Committee to be sent the response from Michael Gove once it had been received and the Executive Member for Finance and Governance agreed.

Councillor Jerrome recognised the work of the finance and Change Board was going to be undertaking and asked how challenging the task faced by the Board would be to achieve. The Executive Member for Finance and Governance responded that it was a great task to continue to deliver savings but was optimistic about the work that the Finance and Change Board and what they could achieve by working better with other organisations across the borough.

Councillor Newgrosh thanked the Executive Member and Officers for the detailed response given around the Council's Electrical and Gas supply prices.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the presentation be noted.
- 2) That the response from Michael Gove to the 50 lowest funded Local Authorities be shared with the Committee.
- 3) That more details as to the role and work of the Finance and Change Board be shared with the Committee.

8. SCRUTINY REVIEW

The Chair gave a brief overview of the review that was done that lead to the report and handed over to the Governance Manager to add any further details. The Governance Manager asked members to note paragraph 2 and the positives that were found by the review around the general culture and attitude of the Council towards Scrutiny. The Governance Manager added that as the Council had all the required elements to deliver high quality Scrutiny it would be more of an evolution

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of the process, building on what was already good and elevating it to being excellent.

Councillor Carter noted the recommendations for increasing the level of engagement with the public and raised some concerns about asking the public through social media to comment about areas being considered by Scrutiny. The Governance Manager clarified that the Committee would receive possible topics to cover from the public and the Committee would then review them and decide if they should be considered.

Councillor Carter also noted the timeline around the start of implementing the changes and if this was deliverable. The Chair responded that it would be a phased approach with some elements coming in from the start of the year and other elements brought in later.

Councillor Jerrome welcomed recommendation 8, which stated that there would be an annual review of Scrutiny, and the continual improvement that would lead to.

Councillor Dagnall spoke about the role that consultation with other Ward Members and the public had played in the task and finish group around Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller visits and how she felt it was important for residents to feed into the Committee.

Councillor Axford Expressed how much she had enjoyed being part of the Scrutiny review and how it was of key importance to increase the level of communication between the Committee and the public.

Following the discussions, the Chair moved the recommendations of the report and they were agreed.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and recommendations agreed.

9. GYPSY, ROMA, TRAVELLER TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Chair introduced the report and explained that following agreement by the Committee the report would be submitted to the Executive to receive a response to the recommendations.

The Vice chair spoke the good work that had been done by the group and approved the recommendations within the report.

Following a brief discussion the recommendations were moved by the Chair and agreed by the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the report and its recommendations be approved and submitted to the Executive for a response.

10. FUTURE ITEMS FOR SCRUTINY

The Chair informed the Committee that a suggestion had been made by councillor Carter around parking and the impact of Manchester United games on the area. Councillor Carter informed the Committee that since he made his suggestion the club had made a statement regarding redevelopment but spoke about making a great experience for fans but didn't mention the experience of residents in the area.

The Committee agreed that this suggestion should be considered as an item to be considered in the next municipal year.

RESOLVED: That the impact of events at Old Trafford Stadium on the surrounding area be considered as a possible item for the Committee in the 2022/23 municipal year.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and finished at 9.05 pm