

## **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**21 SEPTEMBER 2022**

### **PRESENT**

Councillor D. Acton (in the Chair).

Councillors D. Butt (Vice-Chair), J.M. Axford, G. Carter, G. Coggins, W. Frass, K. Procter, R. Thompson, L. Walsh and S. Zhi

#### In attendance

Councillor Ross	Executive Member for Finance and Governance
Councillor Williams	Executive Member for Climate Change and Transport Strategy
Councillor Adshead	Executive Member for Environmental Services
Councillor Patel	Executive Member for Economy and Regeneration
Graeme Bentley	Director of Finance and Systems
Adrian Fisher	Director of Growth and Regulatory Services
Chris Morris	Director of Highways, Transport, and Environment
Mark Ford	Principal Civil Engineer, Consulting & Rail, Amey Consulting

### **APOLOGIES**

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

### **8. MINUTES**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meetings held 16 March 2022 and 29 June 2022 be agreed as an accurate record.

### **9. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors Walsh and Procter declared an interest as members of the Council's Planning Committee.

### **10. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

The question below was received from Andrew Gould (exec member Friends of Trafford's Parks and Green Spaces) and read out by the Chair.

"The Friends of Trafford's Parks and Green Spaces would like to ask the following question of the Scrutiny Committee on Wed 21st Sep.

Why has the Scrutiny Committee been recommended to propose to the executive that Trafford continues to rely on existing greenspace protections instead of moving forward with a scheme such as "Fields in Trust"?

The thrust of these schemes is to protect parks and green spaces from changes in political will and planning dept influence to ensure these well-loved public assets are not developed on and retained for future generations.

We urge that the Scrutiny Committee reject the report's recommendation and instead further investigate how to ensure these parks and green space protections can be improved, and we would welcome an invitation to participate in the process."

The Chair accepted the question and stated that while a recommendation had been provided within the report to the Committee it would be for the Members to decide how they would proceed.

## **11. FINANCE CHANGE PROGRAMME**

The Chair asked that all presenters take reports and presentations as read to allow adequate time for questions and discussion due to the large number of items on the agenda.

The Executive Member for Finance and Governance gave a short introduction to the presentation. The Committee were informed of the budgetary challenges the Council faced in 2022/23 and 2023/24 financial years and the impact of current issues, including inflation and the cost of energy, were having on the Council's position. An overview of the Financial Change Programme approach and structure was provided, which included the terms of reference for the two main Boards. The programme was focused upon a collaborative approach to the challenges the Council faced as they could not be addressed by the Council on its own. Part of the Council's approach involved spearheading the F20 campaign to national government to secure an increased settlement for the lowest funded Councils across the Country.

The Council's budget proposals would be presented to the Committee in October and the Executive Member informed the Committee that the budget presented to the Committee would contain a gap to be closed before the final budget was set in February 2023.

Following the overview Councillor Carter asked what the saving proposal that could save £500,000 and if that could be shared. Second question whether the Council were looking at increasing revenue through enforcement. The Executive Member for Finance and Governance stated that the Council were looking at increasing enforcement but added that the funding raised could only be used in certain ways. Rather than raising income it was more around enforcing laws to address frustrations within the Community. The Director of Finance and Systems responded that it was too early to say what the proposals were and what they would deliver but the Committee were assured more information would be available in October.

Councillor Axford noted that the programme was looking at innovating and bringing change to meet the pressures and asked what that meant and whether community wealth building was part of it. The Executive Member for Finance and Governance responded that they were working within the council and across other authorities to trial new ways of delivering services to achieve savings. The Council were looking at all ideas being brought forward although community wealth building had not been considered yet. The Executive Member for Finance and

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Governance invited Councillor Axford and all Scrutiny Members to provide suggestions for how the Council could look to save money.

Councillor Procter asked how the public consultation would be handled. The Executive Member for Finance and Governance responded that the consultation would be conducted with a broader span of engagement than had been done previously. The aim of the broader engagement was to provide residents with enough information so they could provide feedback to help the Councils budget.

Councillor Walsh noted that last year the Council had received the settlement very late in the year and asked whether it was likely to be received earlier this year. The Executive Member for Finance and Governance stated that settlement had not yet been set and with a new government coming in it was difficult to predict what the settlement for councils would be. The Executive Member for Finance and Governance had concerns about the impact that inflation would continue to have on the budget and the whether the settlement would take that into account. The Director of Finance and Systems added that the indications received so far suggested they would receive about the same as in previous year without add-ons for inflation.

Councillor Walsh asked whether it would be better to go out to the public as soon as possible to allow the public time to absorb the shock around the high level of funds needed to be found. The Executive Member for Finance and Governance agreed with Councillor Walsh and informed the Committee that consultation would start once the draft budget had been agreed by the Executive. The Executive Member for Finance and Governance drew the Committee's attention to the lobbying leaflet within the presentation and informed them that a version of the leaflet would be circulated to residents informing them of the challenges the Council faced.

Councillor Coggins asked a series of questions including how Trafford compared to other similarly funded Council's, what was meant by discretionary services within the presentation, and what was meant by the phrase worst case scenario within the presentation. The Executive Member for Finance and Governance responded that other Councils who received similar levels of funding to Trafford were also struggling and a group of those authorities were working together to appeal for more funding. The discretionary services which would be looked at as part of the budget process were along the lines of libraries and the music service and the Executive Member for Finance and Governance offered to provide a list of what was a discretionary service and what was not for the budget scrutiny process. With regards to the worst-case scenario the Executive Member for Finance and Governance stated that the Council were not at that point yet and assured the Committee that the Executive was taking measures to ensure they did not reach the point where the Council would no longer be in control of its own budget.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the presentation be noted.

- 2) That Scrutiny Members are invited to submit any savings ideas to the Executive Member for Finance and Governance.
- 3) That a list of discretionary and non-discretionary service will be provided as part of the budget scrutiny process.

## **12. CARRINGTON RELIEF ROAD**

The Executive Member for Climate Change and Transport Strategy took the report as read and gave a short introduction to the Committee before handing over to the Director of Growth and Regulatory Services. In the introduction the Executive Member for Climate Change and Transport Strategy noted that the subject had been considered by the Committee previously and Committee Members had requested to be involved in the engagement with the public. The Committee were informed that a communication and engagement strategy had been developed which looked to engage with many residents across several areas of the borough. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services drew the Committees attention to areas 5,6, 7, and 8 of the report. Part 7 linked to the selection of who would deliver the consultation and how it would be done. The Committee were also asked to note that the relief road was part of the programme of works planned for the places for everyone process. The two appendices provided alongside the report listed what had been done so far and a timeline of the key elements of the remainder of the programme.

Councillor Axford asked whether the consultation would be delivered by the same company as the previous consultation and why they had been selected. Councillor Axford also enquired about the environmental impact of the road and how the Council would align that work with their goals for carbon reduction. The Executive Member for Climate Change and Transport Strategy shared the concerns Committee Members had regarding the company who had done the previous consultation. The last consultation had included 10,000 leaflets being dropped in Bucklow St Martins ward and had a particularly poor response rate. The Executive Member for Climate Change and Transport Strategy had raised concerns with the company and provided suggestions on how the consultation could be improved. One area was the importance of involving a wider area of residents who would be impacted by the construction of the road. The Executive Member for Climate Change and Transport Strategy spoke about how another consultation within the area had proven successful and assured the Committee that the lessons learned from that exercise would be utilised to improve the process. The Executive Member for Climate Change and Transport Strategy provided additional assurance that the environmental impacts of the road would be consulted on with community groups.

Councillor Coggins asked about the implications section of the report and how it spoke about the benefits of active transport rather than looking at the impact from the increase in traffic that new road would bring to the area. The Executive Member for Climate Change and Transport Strategy took the point on board and sated that it was a new item added to reports and it would take a while to fine tune the reporting.

Councillor Coggins spoke about how people did not respond to consultations as they were often long, technical, and time consuming to complete and people would not take the time if they felt it would not have an impact. The Executive Member for Climate Change and Transport Strategy agreed with the points made by Councillor Coggins and assured the Committee that all efforts would be made to increase the level of engagement with the consultation process.

Councillor Coggins read out a question from the Friends of Carrington moss of whether the Council would consult for 12 weeks. The Executive Member for Climate Change and Transport Strategy informed the Committee that discussions were ongoing with Friends of Carrington Moss and a response would be sent to them directly, with a copy of the response provided to the Committee.

Councillor Butt asked what scope for change was there for residents responding to the consultation. The Executive Member for Climate Change and Transport Strategy responded that the Council needed to identify how to communicate to residents what influence they could have on the plans. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services added that while the consultation was of limited scope there would be many areas the public could influence, with rights of way being one example, and this would be communicated clearly within the consultation.

Councillor Walsh asked whether the Council had considered doing the exercise in house. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services explained that the company was a sub-contractor of Amey who were very experienced in these types of consultations, which was why they had been selected. The Director of Highways, Transport, and Environment added that the company being a sub-contractor of Amey enabled the Council to synergise their approach to provide savings while the expertise within Amey helped to ensure that all the rules were followed.

The Chair noted how tight the timeline set out within the report was and asked whether it was manageable, especially as not all of the funding had been secured. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services responded that the report timeline stated spring/summer, but it was more likely to be in summer and would fall within the 2023/24 financial year.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That the Committee are to receive a copy of the response to Friends of Carrington Moss.

### **13. FEASIBILITY AND COST OF PLACING ALL PARKS INTO A FIELD IN TRUSTS**

The Executive Member for Environmental Services noted that the item was requested to come to the Committee following a motion by Council. The Council's green spaces were very popular and the Council were committed to protect them. Within the report the pros and cons of each option the Council could take to protect its green spaces was listed. The Executive Member for Environmental Services drew attention to the option of placing green spaces within Fields in Trust

which provided excellent protection but could also prevent enhancements within those spaces.

The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services spoke of the differences in situation between Liverpool City Council (who had committed to placing all of the areas green spaces into Fields in Trust) and Trafford, which had had a comparatively large number of sites available for development. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services informed the Committee about Trafford's Fields in Trust organisation and assured members that the Council would continue to use that approach. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services concluded the introduction by bringing the committee's attention to the other forms of protection that were in place for green spaces which related to various pieces of legislation.

Councillor Coggins noted that the areas which had been placed into trusts were all areas where a large public outcry had been received and asked whether that was a factor in which sites were chosen rather than the environmental benefit. The Executive Member for Environmental Services responded that many reasons were put forward when considering the applications to place a space into Fields in Trust and that an analysis of the decisions made would need to look at each application rather than identifying patterns retrospectively. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services stated that he would reply in writing about the selection of the sites in question.

Council Walsh asked whether it was a cart blanche approach or if it was an approach that could be applied to areas identified with a community group were well positioned to support it. The Executive Member for Environmental Services responded that it was done on a case-by-case basis and how the Council strive to use the right approach at the right time. There were multiple other approaches, such as village green proposals, which could be taken to protect a space and a decision on which approach to take was reached on each application following in-depth review and consultation.

Committee Members raised concerns that the report did not contain adequate information relating to the possible costs involved in moving all green spaces into Fields in Trust. Committee Members agreed that there was insufficient information provided within the report for them to make a recommendation to Council. The Committee agreed to receive further information via email and they would decide how to proceed once they had that information.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That a written response on the reasons for the selection of spaces to be placed into Fields in Trust be sent to Councillor Coggins.
- 3) That additional information be sent to Committee Members via email.
- 4) That the topic be considered further by the Committee before a recommendation to Council is agreed.

## **14. URMSTON ACTIVE NEIGHBOURHOOD**

The Executive Member for Climate Change and Transport Strategy gave a brief introduction of the report to the Committee. The report provided an overview of the work done to date on the Urmston Active Neighbourhood active travel programme. Following public consultation, a number of developments to improve active travel within the M41 area had been identified and put into routes. The report contained seven key routes with a complexity rating for the implementation of each route provided on page 9 of the report. The assessment informed the phasing of the implementation of the routes covered on pages 10 and 11 of the report.

The Director of Highways, Transport, and Environment added that the programme was moving from concept design to preliminary design. Had received 3400 suggestions from the consultation which had been taken and used to draw up the routes shown in the report. The options had been presented to TFGM who provided suggestions on which areas to do. The service was currently putting together sets of recommendations based upon what was achievable given the funding and taking potential risks such as inflation and rising costs into account. Once developed those recommendations would be put to the local ward councillors. The Committee were asked to look at the last page which detailed the stage gates for the remainder of the project. Preliminary design was to start in January 2023 following further discussions with TFGM.

The Chair asked a question on behalf of Councillor Carter which noted that the initial available funding was £6.5M and the proposal cost was £4M. It was then asked whether it was possible to remove route two from phase one and to implement phase two instead, which would bring the cost to around £6.3M and was still under the initial funding available. The Director of Highways, Transport, and Environment responded that the programme was moving to detailed design and if, following the conclusion of those designs, the costs came back lower than the funding available they would re-evaluate how to proceed. The Committee were reminded that this was only the first tranche of funding and it was hoped that eventually enough funding would be received to put all £18.5M worth of suggestions in place. The Executive Member for Climate Change and Transport Strategy added that the funding would be released in stages and changes at this stage could create issues in accessing the funding of the £6.5M tranche.

Councillor Procter spoke of the frustrations with the delays and how the biggest issue was around the lack of communication with the public about the programme. Councillor Procter realised that the Council had to meet the requirements set by Greater Manchester, but the residents needed to be kept informed with what was happening. The Executive Member for Climate Change and Transport Strategy stated that it was one of the Council's first active neighbourhood programmes and had done a large amount of engagement originally which had raised expectations. The Executive Member for Climate Change and Transport Strategy had committed to meeting regularly with the M41 Councillors and those would continue and he asked that ward Councillors pass the information from those meetings onto residents. The Director of Highways, Transport, and Environment added that there had been some delays around communication and engagement with the project

and changes had been made to improve this going forward. The Director of Highways, Transport, and Environment assure the Committee that the timeline was to have some works underway in January 2023 but that came with the caveat of having to meet the requirements of TFGM before they proceeded.

Councillor Coggins asked why the second route had been chosen when the route suggested by TFGM seemed to deliver a lot more in terms of changing the way people moved about within the area. The Executive Member for Climate Change and Transport Strategy responded that the discussions around the routes both with local ward Councillors and TFGM had been robust and provided a large amount of challenge. It was from those discussions that the second route had been drawn up and agreed upon. While the original route did have a lot of infrastructural changes for the areas a lot of that work was away from residential routes and would have had limited benefit for the residents of M41. The Principal Civil Engineer, Consulting & Rail, Amey Consulting provided additional information about the conversations with TFGM and the standards that the plans had to meet in order to get to the stage they were at. The Principal Civil Engineer, Consulting & Rail, Amey Consulting concluded by assuring the Committee that all barriers and constraints to active travel within the area reported within the consultation had been taken into account when developing the plans.

Councillor Thompson asked whether the meeting listed within the report between one Trafford and TFGM had gone ahead and whether the outcome of the meeting had been optimistic with regards to delivering the project. The Principal Civil Engineer, Consulting & Rail, Amey Consulting informed the Committee that the meeting had gone ahead and the challenge from ward Councillors for a different route had been presented to TFGM and had agreed to proceed.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That the Executive Member for Climate Change and Transport Strategy commits to continue to meet with ward Councillors.
- 3) That ward councillors be asked to disseminate the information from those meetings to residents.

## **15. EXECUTIVE RESPONSE TO DISABILITY ACCESS TASK AND FINISH GROUP INTERIM REPORT**

The Executive Member for Economy and Regeneration drew out a few key points from the report. Noted that the aim of the work was to ensure that disabled people would be benefitted by planning policies and the Committee were assured that the Executive were Committed to this. The report accurately recognised the balance the Council had to influence planning through building regulation and through utilisation of soft power by holding discussions with developers and training for Officers and Councillors. Spoke about the forthcoming policy changes through the Trafford Design Guide, Trafford Design Code, local plan, and places for everyone plan over the following year. Noted the frustrations by the Planning Committee due to the delays in these plans as they want to work with planning rules already in place. The Executive Member for Economy and Regeneration spoke of the

timeline for the completion of those plans and assured the Committee there would be opportunity to have input on those policies.

The Chair spoke about the different ways the Council could impact planning and welcomed the development of the new policies. The Chair then noted the difference in approach between planning and building controls. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services provided an explanation of the enforcement of building control regulations set by the government and the option of the Council as a planning authority to set higher standards of accessibility through their local plan. Unfortunately, the Council could not insist on those higher standards when acting as building control.

RESOLVED: That the response be noted.

**16. EXECUTIVE RESPONSE TO THE GYPSY, ROMA, AND TRAVELLER VISIT TASK AND FINISH GROUP INTERIM REPORT**

Councillor Axford welcomed the response but felt that there was not enough information available to decide the current cost of clean-up made providing toilets and bins cost effective. Councillor asked questions relating to negotiated stopping and having a transit site and about the use of section 177 and section 61 by the police. Councillor Axford also commented that she felt all Councillors should be informed of Traveller visits within the borough and not just the relevant Ward Councillors. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services responded that there would be a further report looking specifically at the associated costs. Negotiated stopping, transit sites, and stopping facilities fulfilled the same purpose but in different ways with differing costs with a transit site being the most expensive. The Council was going to investigate the options in more depth but given the average number of visits Trafford received negotiated stopping was more likely to be cost effective.

The Executive Member for Environmental Services added that there had been an issue in 2021 due to the limited availability of facilities, especially during the time of year the visits happened. In addition to the cost of clean-up there was the impact upon staff who had to clean up the sites and so the Council were looking to move towards having facilities in place.

Councillor Procter asked whether there was opportunity to agree acceptable behaviour with Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities visiting the area. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services stated that could be done through negotiated stopping or if there was an agreed stopping site and that officers would look at what other councils had done.

The Vice-Chair noted that enforcement could be difficult given the transient nature of those communities and stated he would be interested in seeing the approaches taken by other Councils.

RESOLVED: That the response be noted.

**17. EVENTS AT OLD TRAFFORD TASK AND FINISH GROUP UPDATE**

Councillor Walsh informed the Committee that the group had held their first meeting, but the second meeting had been cancelled due to the passing of the Queen. Councillor Walsh asked that the Governance Officer arrange a replacement meeting as soon as possible so that the group did not lose their momentum.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the update be noted.
- 2) That a replacement meeting for the group be arranged as soon as possible.

**18. WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23**

The Chair introduced the item and asked Members if they had any additional items that they would like to add to the work programme, but none were raised.

RESOLVED: That the work programme be added.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 p.m. and finished at 8.49 p.m.