

## **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**13 MARCH 2024**

### **PRESENT**

Councillor D. Acton (in the Chair).

Councillors J. Holden (Vice-Chair), J.M. Axford, G. Carter, W. Frass, D. Jarman, W. Jones and L. Walsh

#### In attendance

Councillor Ross	Leader of the Council
Councillor Patel	Executive Member for Economy and Regeneration
Councillor Williams	Executive Member for Climate Change
Sara Saleh	Corporate Director of Strategy and Resources
Adrian Fisher	Director of Growth and Regulatory Services
Harry Callaghan	Democratic Officer

### **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G. Coggins, M.J. Taylor, B.G. Winstanley, D. Butt and D. Western

### **26. MINUTES**

Councillor Carter raised that he had not had a response from officers on two questions asked at the Scrutiny meeting dated 16<sup>th</sup> January 2024. Firstly, regarding a knotweed issue within his ward, and the second around plans surrounding William Wroe golf course.

#### RESOLVED:

- 1) That the minutes of the meeting held 16 January 2024, be agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.
- 2) That Councillor Carter receive responses to the two questions raised.

### **27. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations were made.

### **28. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

No questions were received.

### **29. CORPORATE PLAN UPDATE**

Councillor Ross, Leader of the Council, spoke through the presentation that was circulated with the agenda, which provided an update on the activity to date relating to the Corporate Plan, key highlights relating to the three strategic priorities in the last year, and the next steps in progressing the Corporate Plan.

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The Committee were informed that the number of Corporate Priorities started with seven, however, this had gone down to three, with the Leader informing the Committee of the highlights and achievements done by the Council across the Municipal Year to address them.

The first priority – Reducing Health Inequalities – included the following: launch of Trafford’s Tobacco Alliance; accessible cycling activity via Wheels for All; a physical activity referral scheme in Partington; a new cycle hub at Stretford Leisure Centre; place based physical activity plans, starting with the inaugural Broomwood Moving Network; beat the streets, which promoted physical activity between families; and the establishment of a fall’s prevention service.

The second priority was ‘Supporting People out of Poverty’ and the Leader shared the work done over the past year. Trafford Council was now paying the Real Living Wage and signed up to the Greater Manchester (GM) Good Employment Charter, Trafford’s Council tax support scheme was now the best in GM, and the Trafford Assist scheme was administering support more than £3.2Million. The Committee were informed that the Poverty Action Group continued to meet quarterly, with the Trafford Poverty Strategy refreshed in autumn 2023, incorporating the poverty truth commission’s findings. The Leader added that one of the recommendations of the Poverty Truth Commission had led to the creation of the One Stop Shop. This was being trialled at Stretford Public Hall and provided residents access to different Council service in one location.

The final priority – Addressing the Climate Crisis – included highlights such as the establishment of a strategic partnership supporting the decarbonisation of Trafford Park Business under the Bee Net Zero Brand, grant funding to progress the development of the civic quarter low carbon heat network, the replacement of existing gas boilers with air source heat pumps and solar panels at the refurbished Altrincham Leisure Centre, and the introduction of Be.EV Electric Vehicle Charging infrastructure in the Borough. The Leader also mentioned the programme of urban tree planting, agreed with City of Trees, and the Walking, Wheeling and Cycling Strategy which had been launched.

The Leader shared other key activity achieved across the year, which included but was not limited to the following projects; the Right to Streets Project, work to tackle violence against women and girls with the Policy Lab, Trafford LIVE, the launch of a new supported housing strategy, a £160 million residential scheme bringing 639 new private and affordable homes, and the launch of the new Cultural Strategy.

The Leader finished by reminding the Committee that the current Corporate Plan came to an end that year and highlighted the changes which had taken place in this time. A timeline for the implementation of the next Corporate Plan was then shared, with this expected at the Executive and Council in July.

Councillor Axford was unsure what the performance indicators within the presentation were and asked whether there were any case studies of how people had been supported out of poverty. Councillor Axford asked further whether there were any statistics on the take up of cycling and the impact of active travel

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schemes. Councillor Axford highlighted that the level of licensed vehicles being electric, was remaining consistent at 2.5% and not going up. The Leader referred Councillor Axford to a report that went to the Executive in January, which included a lot more information and statistics supporting the headline figures included within the presentation. The Leader felt it was too soon to review what had happened with regard to active travel, however, was very keen to review the impact over the medium-to-long term. The Leader and the Corporate Director of Strategy and Resources assured Councillor Axford that there would be case studies within the end of year Corporate Plan report. Councillor Williams, Executive Member for Climate Change, agreed that more needed to be done to present how many people are using the Active Travel schemes to promote the facilities more widely. Councillor Williams also added that around £90,000 had been secured in grant funding to be spent on installing cycle storage facilities across the Borough.

Councillor Carter asked the Leader several questions. Firstly, Councillor Carter was pleased to see how importantly the Council was taking vaccinations for children and asked how schools were engaged in this, particularly during admissions. The Leader referred Councillor Carter to the work done, and ongoing, by the Director of Public Health on vaccinations in schools, especially around measles.

Councillor Carter asked if a headline summary could be provided of the Council tax support scheme, including a comparison of generosity against other GM Boroughs. The Leader agreed with this point and would take this away to provide a headline summary for Members moving forward.

Councillor Carter enquired as to whether it would be possible to see how the climate change priority will be embedded in the redevelopment plans of Trafford Wharfside. The Leader responded that this would be embedded within the plans and was pleased with the appointment of the Head of Climate Change in the Municipal year.

Continuing with the climate change priority, Councillor Carter asked whether there had been any consideration of solar power in Local Authority schools, highlighting the case study of a school he was parent governor. The Leader pointed to the public sector decarbonisation scheme which had taken place some years earlier, which had not been successful. However, the Leader added that the GM Green Summit in October 2023, included a solar schools initiative which several primary schools within Trafford had signed up to.

Councillor Carter asked finally if the Council knew why ultra-low emission vehicles in Trafford was only a third of what it was in similar boroughs. The Leader did not have an answer to this in the meeting and would get back to Councillor Carter on this.

Councillor Holden supported the right to the streets project, however, felt dimming of streetlights was taking effect across the Borough and asked if there had been any discussion around street lights during this project. The Leader responded that this feedback would be considered as the project continued.

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Councillor Holden asked further when the Bee Network was going to arrive in Trafford. The Leader felt Trafford was already benefitting from the Bee Network, through the £2 fare on buses and the Bee Network app which had been through improvements. The Committee were informed that the yellow buses would be in Trafford by January 2025, with Trafford having to wait until tranche three for this. However, the Leader felt this had given the Borough the chance to take some learning from how the new system had worked in other boroughs. The Leader recognised that wards such as Manor and Bucklow St. Martins were underserved by buses and felt that this extra time to consider the Bee Network provided greater opportunity to look at where the network was not working for residents. Councillor Williams added that the rationale for Trafford being in tranche three was due to areas in North GM being less served by the Metrolink.

Councillor Frass referred to the next steps of the Corporate Plan and asked Councillor Ross who the key stakeholders referenced in the presentation were to be. Councillor Frass also asked whether the Leader could provide any support on a particularly underserved school bus route within his ward, where he had struggled to get contact from Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM). The Leader asked Councillor Frass to email him regarding the school bus route. The Leader informed Councillor Frass that there were a vast range of partners who would be involved in the establishment of the new Corporate Plan. This included the police, housing providers, NHS Providers, and Trafford College. The Leader emphasised his excitement for the plan.

Councillor Jones appreciated the Be.EV rollout and asked if there were any plans of extension of Be.EV to increase its output and improve its app, which he considered poor. The Leader highlighted the desire to expand the network of electric chargers across Trafford and GM. However, despite Trafford being in a strong position regarding EV rollout, other authorities were at different stages. The Leader asked Councillor Jones to share the app issues with him after the meeting, so he could take this away.

Councillor Jones asked further if any of the themes being thought of for the next Corporate Plan could be shared. The Leader provided a taste for what priorities were being considered for the new Corporate plan. The climate crisis was to remain high, as well as providing the best start for children and young people in the borough, allowing people to live healthy independent lives, housing for all, and culture, arts, and heritage for all across the Borough.

Councillor Walsh recognised how sobering the budget could be. However, Councillor Walsh felt it important to remember and recognise how much work really went on and applauded the Council for this.

The Chair thanked the Leader and the Corporate Director for attending and providing the presentation.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the presentation be noted.

- 2) That the Leader provide Councillors with a headline summary of the Council's Council tax support scheme including a comparison with other Greater Manchester boroughs.
- 3) That the Leader provide Councillor Carter a response to his question on electric vehicle usage in Trafford.
- 4) That Councillor Frass should email the Leader regarding the school bus route in his ward.
- 5) That Councillor Jones provide the Leader with feedback on the Be.EV app for the Leader to take back to relevant officers at Be.EV.

### **30. CARRINGTON RELIEF ROAD**

The Chair highlighted that questions and queries had been received from the Friends of Carrington Moss group. The responses to these questions had been shared with the Committee prior to the meeting and had also been sent to the group directly.

The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services introduced the report and spoke through a presentation to illustrate the background for why the Council needed to make improvements to infrastructure. The Committee were informed and reminded that the Carrington and Partington area had been through rapid industrial expansion over the last 100 years. Despite previously being well connected areas, especially by rail, over the last 40 to 60 years, the infrastructure had eroded, and the area was left with a legacy road network with the area now isolated. The Director provided an overview of the geography of the area which caused this isolation. As such, the Director informed Committee Members that this placed significant pressure on the A6144.

The Director continued by highlighting the decision by the Council to make the area one of focus, most recently through the Places for Everyone scheme, which aimed to bring significant investment to the area, with 5000 homes by the 2040s.

As such, the Director added that this level of new development, in an area with poor accessibility compounded the need for infrastructure development. The relief road and its location had been identified in September 2021. The route totalled 3.5KM and included work to the adjacent roads. The Director then shared the funding behind the project.

The Carrington Spur which currently existed in the area, had deliberately excluded pedestrians and cyclist and had been designed in a time when car was king. The Director informed Members that the new road was being designed to encourage further support to the Council's active travel schemes. The Director finished by sharing a draft picture of what the road would look like.

Councillor Axford understood the rationale behind the road, however, remained concerned about the implications of increased car usage on the road. Councillor Axford enquired as to why there was no bus lane on the road. Councillor Axford asked how confident the Director was of receiving the funding from the Greater

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Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) which was included in the report. Councillor Axford also asked how the public engagement in January had gone.

Regarding the bus lane, the Director of Growth and Regulatory Services responded that there was increasing thinking that buses should be incorporated with the main carriageway, with liaison ongoing with Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) to look at the approach which should have been taken with buses. The Director did add that discussions with TfGM did involve whether buses required their own arrangements at the junctions along the road.

The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services apologised, saying the report should have been updated regarding the public engagement. This had been due to take place in the Spring, however, due to logistical and technical reason this had been delayed, with an intention to launch in May.

The Director recognised the very clear risk related to funding, mentioned a formula which had gone to the Planning and Development Management Committee around how the Council could gather proportionate contributions from developers, which had been developed and was now active. The Director did inform Members that some public funding would be required, however, was confident that across this area of Greater Manchester, there were schemes which would support the infrastructure due to the housing and economic benefits of the project. The Executive Member for Climate Change, Councillor Williams, added that work was already being advanced to get funding from the Department for Transport, with every opportunity to receive funding being explored.

Councillor Axford understood what the Director of Growth and Regulatory Services was saying regarding the buses, however, reiterated her disappointment. The Executive Member for Economy and Regeneration, Councillor Patel, encouraged Councillor Axford to not be disappointed, as they felt the road would hugely increase the bus link to Partington and without the new road there would have been no improvement to the service.

Councillor Carter asked whether the buses would be staying on the A6144 to service residents and workers in Carrington, rather than coming onto the new road which would bypass the area. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Service felt that with bus franchising it allowed greater influence for the Council to determine the routes they took. The Director recognised that there would be a combination, with some bus routes offering faster routes out of Partington via the new road, whilst other routes remaining and serving Carrington, with the route being calmer.

Councillor Carter asked what the level of risk would be relating to the £50Million of funding still to be secured. The Director responded that in theory there was enough funding in the development to meet the needs currently required. The risk would arise from getting the first part of the infrastructure development underway, as once this began, it would enable development to come forward.

Thirdly, Councillor Carter asked how the road would impact the peat land South of the proposed carriageway, particularly in relation to drainage. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Service shared an old image, displaying how the road ran

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entirely North of the peat area. Initial ground inspections, with more to follow, had shown only a very small lens of peat in one area. As such, despite being a factor, the Council was not currently concerned about peat.

Councillor Carter's final question asked what chance there would be to reopen the old rail lines which still existed in the area. The Executive Member for Climate Change informed Councillor Carter that this was not something the Council was opposed to, however, it was not something the Council had the gift to determine. Trafford had recognised that the road was currently at capacity and to deliver the 5000 homes involved in Places For Everyone, the existing highways network would need to be upgraded. Councillor Carter encouraged the Council to make the message clear around how the establishment of railway line was not a decision for the Council to make. The Executive Member for Economy and Regeneration took the point, adding that there were plans to make use of the disused rail lines for the Council's active travel strategy.

Councillor Frass recognised the requirement for Government to instigate the railway being reopened, however, questioned why the Council would be allowed to repurpose it as a walking and cycling route instead. As such, Councillor Frass enquired as to whether it could be repurposed as a tram route which would have Greater Manchester control. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services informed the Committee that the railway was still owned by Network Rail and the Council had surveyed some of the structures to find them to have deteriorated. Regarding the Metrolink, the Director highlighted the rapid transit strategy which was currently being developed by TfGM. The Council was pushing for New Carrington to be included in longer term projects related to this strategy, however, recognised the demand for projects of expansion to the Metrolink due to its success.

The Chair asked if the cancelling of the Manchester HS2 expansion was going to make a difference to funding. The Executive Member for Economy and Regeneration responded that there was currently no evidence supporting the idea that this money would be put into public transport.

Councillor Holden asked whether there was sufficient expert advice, guidance, and information being sought to avoid issues going through the old petrochemical site. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services responded that this consideration had been included within the report, with it likely to be an issue and concern. The Committee were reassured that the aim was to disturb the ground as little as possible.

Councillor Frass enquired as to where suspected contaminated drainage was going, with it being separated to prevent cross-contamination. The Executive Member for Economy and Regeneration responded that a formal remediation strategy was being worked on with the landowner and the Environment Agency, with the answer to this to come through that. The Director provided a further response referring to ensuring that the water from the road does not mingle with the ground water and its contaminants.

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Chair thanked Councillors and Officers for their responses.

RESOLVED: That the contents of the report be noted.

**31. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2024/25**

Councillor Acton provided an overview of what work had been completed across the year, and referenced the Reducing Car Dependency task and finish group report which would come in the next Municipal Year. Councillor Acton also informed Members of the Committee that responses to the Scrutiny reports looking at Access to Council Services and Events and Old Trafford would come to the Committee in 2024/25. Councillor Acton also reminded Members of the Budget reports which come every year, firstly in November, outlining the draft proposals, and the Scrutiny response that goes to the meeting in January, with Budget Scrutiny set to take place in late November again.

Councillor Walsh recognised the Events at Old Trafford Task and Finish group report, adding that the report did not scrutinise the parking service on matchdays at Old Trafford, and felt this was something that the Committee could bring to a meeting in the future. Councillor Walsh added that there was an opportunity for Council officers to play a greater role in matchday parking at Old Trafford.

Councillor Axford asked whether the topic of Travellers in the Borough be brought back in the new year, with persistent issues remaining.

Councillor Axford added further that there would be opportunity later in the year to look at the Bee Network as it comes to Trafford through Tranche three by the end of 2024. Councillor Axford raised the opportunity to get colleagues from the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) to attend and discuss.

Councillor Axford also raised concerns on affordable housing in the Borough, as well as looking at remaining issues with housing providers such as L&Q.

Councillor Carter questioned whether Carrington Relief Road needed to come to the Committee again, if there is not going to be a fundamental change in that time. The Chair responded that it had been agreed to monitor the project once agreed by the Executive, however, added that it was up to the Committee to decide when they felt it was relevant to bring the item. Councillor Axford felt that the financial risk of the project should be considered. Councillor Carter did not disagree with either of these points but felt that unless there was set to be a significant decision point over the 12 months, the Committee would be considering the same points.

Councillor Carter added further whether a work needed to be considered on the duration and duplication of roadworks, citing the case of Kings Road and the timeline behind this. Councillor Carter asked whether there was appetite of the Committee to review and assess the Council's ability to govern Trafford's roadworks, due to the Community impact of roadworks overrunning. Councillor Axford agreed that this would be interesting to look at.

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Councillor Carter raised a further point regarding Council investment in IT systems and resources, adding that he could not find any measure of performance within the Council of how these systems performs versus what was in the capital expenditure request to justify it being invested in. Councillor Holden raised caution with measuring IT due to the everchanging world and scenario of IT. Councillor Carter responded that he felt it was legitimate to look back at the expectations offered in IT services, to see how they succeeded.

Councillor Jones raised concern around transparency from One Trafford and their Traffic department, questioning how their matrixes worked around completing road repairs and putting new crossings. Councillor Jones felt there was a lack of transparency on this, adding that One Trafford had mentioned to him in the past that they could bring a presentation on this.

Councillor Frass raised the point on Access to Council Services and felt more work could be done on this topic. The Chair responded that a response to the report would come from the Executive in the new Municipal year, adding that there could be an opportunity to look at this in more detail following that response.

Councillor Frass applauded the September meeting which looked at the issues of Damp and Mould and felt there was opportunity to revisit this again. Councillor Acton responded that it would be worthwhile to have officers from these housing providers to come again and provide a response to some of the promises which were made last time round.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and finished at 8.37 pm