

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

23 SEPTEMBER 2021

PRESENT

Councillor D. Acton (in the Chair).

Councillors J.M. Axford, D. Butt, G. Carter, L. Dagnall, K. Procter, R. Thompson and B.G. Winstanley

In attendance

Councillor Freeman	Executive Member for Covid-19 Recovery and Reform
Councillor Adshead	Executive Member for Environmental and Regulatory Services
Adrian Fisher	Director of Growth and Regulatory Services
Caroline Siddall	Housing Strategy and Growth Manager
Alexander Murray	Governance Officer

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R. Chilton, M. Mirza, J.D. Newgrosh, Dr. K. Barclay and D. Western

10. MINUTES

RSOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held 30 June 2021 be agreed as an accurate record.

11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made.

12. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

No questions were received.

13. HOMELESSNESS IN TRAFFORD

The Housing Strategy and Growth Manager provided responses to the questions that had been received in advance. The Committee were informed that it was difficult for Trafford Council to be certain whether people placed within the borough by other authorities were receiving all the necessary support. However, Trafford did conduct visits to the accommodation and asked those placed what support they were receiving. All the support that Trafford was aware of was being provided.

In response to the question on how many people were placed in the Travel lodge in Sale the Committee were told that Manchester had two people placed there as of the 23rd September 2021. Since the 1st of April 2021 Trafford had received ninety nine Section 208 notices with ninety eight coming from Manchester and one from Cheshire East.

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The Chair noted that a recommendation had been made by the Pandemic Scrutiny Committee to improve the Section 208 notice process between Greater Manchester authorities. The Chair then asked whether any improvement had been achieved. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services responded that a lot of work had been done with Greater Manchester authorities to improve the timing of the Section 208 notices and there had been a marked improvement. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services added that people could be placed in Trafford for a number of reasons other than housing which would not be picked up by the notices and he assured the Committee that the service were working to ensure that Trafford were aware of all people were placed within the borough.

Councillor Carter asked whether Trafford was a net importer or exporter. The Housing Strategy and Growth Manager responded that Trafford were a net importer with thirty people placed with Section 208 notices compared to the ninety nine that had been received.

Councillor Dagnall asked whether there were any advantages to people being moved outside of the borough. The Housing Strategy and Growth Manager responded that there were instances when people are placed out of borough for their safety especially connected to Domestic Abuse as there aren't any refuges in the borough.

Councillor Butt asked whether there was an even spread of placements across Greater Manchester authorities. The Housing Strategy and Growth Manager responded that lower cost placements in areas like Rochdale and Oldham were used more than Trafford due to the high rental costs in the borough.

Councillor Dagnall asked whether it was the Council's housing stock or privately owned. CS responded Trafford is not a stock holding authority with the main provider being Trafford Housing Trust.

Councillor Procter asked about the rise seen nationally in women becoming homeless, whether this had been seen within Trafford, and whether that had started to decrease. The Housing Strategy and Growth Manager responded that Trafford hadn't seen any particular increase with women and assured the Committee that the service would continue to monitor the numbers.

The Housing Strategy and Growth Manager informed the Committee that there was a lot of data available, which would be sent to the Committee after the meeting.

Councillor Dagnall asked about the availability of properties in Trafford. The Housing Strategy and Growth Manager responded that only five properties had become available in the last quarter and there was a large number of people who had been on the waiting list for a long time, especially those in the higher bands.

Councillor Dagnall asked how any issues identified were fed back to the Council or the Executive. The Housing Strategy and Growth Manager explained the monitoring and escalation process within the service. Councillor Dagnall then

asked if any actions had been taken to resolve the issues flagged. The Housing Strategy and Growth Manager responded that some COVID funding had been received and the service had used it to hire an additional officer to improve prevention by working with people who were at risk of being evicted or becoming homeless.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the responses to the Committee's questions be noted.
- 2) That additional information be provided by email after the meeting.

14. GYPSY AND TRAVELLER VISITS

The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services gave an overview of the presentation that had been circulated to the Committee with the agenda. The presentation covered the complex situation with the communities in question, the makeup of those communities, and how they identified themselves.

During the summer there had been fourteen visits in Trafford compared to three or four in previous years. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services described some of the issues that Travellers and Gypsies faced when camping on sites, such as sanitation, and within the communities themselves including having access to education, health, and social care support. The Committee were informed of the process taken by the Council once notification of a Traveller or Gypsy visit was received. The process involved visits from regulatory services and the police to establish the needs of the people on the site. The Council then looked to provide facilities at the site and the police took steps to evict them from the land, which generally took about a week.

The main challenge regulatory services faced was getting facilities in place in a timely manner to improve sanitation and reduce the clean-up cost after they had moved on. The Committee were informed that part of the local plan looked to identify the needs of the Gypsy and Traveller communities in Trafford with a view to have a site available to use during the winter months and to have transitive sites for those looking to stay for a short period of time. Once these areas were set up it would allow people who settled on other sites to be moved onto those specific sites. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services concluded the presentation with the recent review by the government and the proposals that had come from the review.

Following the presentation Councillor Winstanley noted the high number of instances and asked if it was many different groups or one group moving from site to site. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services responded that it was a mixture of the two as there were not fourteen separate groups, but it was difficult to identify the exact number of groups as there was a lot of movement of and between them.

Councillor Winstanley asked how far Trafford were along with plans to provide that support. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services responded that Trafford

had struggled to get facilities in place during the summer but were looking at improving response times.

Councillor Dagnall welcomed the approach that was being taken by the Council and the plans to provide better support to those groups. Noted that the Council's attitude in general was very positive towards Travellers and Gypsies and asked if there were any sites in Trafford already. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services responded that there was a permanent site in Trafford where as those who came through in the summer had been groups who were in transit and only stayed for a short period of time.

Councillor Carter asked whether Trafford welcomed gypsies and Travellers. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services responded that it was a political question as to the Council's attitude towards the communities but the Council had an obligation to provide provision for sites once they were established. Councillor Carter then asked what the needs were. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services responded that the needs had not yet been identified but it was part of the local plan work to do so.

Councillor Carter asked about how the Council was able to get environmental health and enforcement offices to the site in timely manner but not facilities. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services responded that the officers were internal resources whereas the sanitary facilities were an external resource which the Council had to secure.

Councillor Carter asked if that would be in place for the following summer. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services responded that it would be if it were made a priority.

Councillor Axford asked whether there was a need for Trafford to have transient sites as it seemed like a good solution. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services responded that if it was based on historic levels then it may not be required but if what was seen over the summer was the new normal then sites would be required.

Councillor Thompson asked whether any grants were available. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services responded that there had been some funding from Homes England but none was available at the moment.

Councillor Dagnall informed the committee that Leeds Council had a policy of negotiated stopping in place that may be of interest to the Council. Councillor Dagnall then asked whether the Council communicated with those groups. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services noted that there were a number of authorities which had regular visits with support in place. The difficulty in Trafford was identifying the needs of groups who the Council had limited amount of involvement with as this had been the first year they had come to the borough.

Councillor Dagnall asked whether the Council could do anything to prevent the media from producing negative pieces about the visits. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services responded that the Council and police had powers to combat

racism or hate speech against groups but there was very little that could be done regarding the press. The Executive Member for Environmental and Regulatory Services added that the Council had been asked for comment by papers and in such situations they gave positive comments. However, the Council did not provide comments to the press if not approached as to not exacerbate the issue or cause more coverage.

The Executive Member for Environmental and Regulatory Services informed the Committee that the Council were looking at measures to make some sites less attractive so that other sites were used, but those measures would also reduce residents' access to green spaces.

The Chair noted the discussions and supported the suggestion to communicate with Gypsies and Travellers. The Chair added that while the regular volume of visits in Trafford may not have been enough to set up sites it was worth raising at a Greater Manchester level to have a number of sites set up across conurbation for Gypsies and Travellers.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the presentation be noted.

15. ACTIVE TRANSPORT

Chair introduced the item and explained that Officers were not able to attend the meeting to deliver the item but any questions would be passed on and answers provided by email.

Councillor Carter raised a question around Tranche 6 in respect to residents parking on the pavements and how this was being taken into account. Councillor Carter also asked about the justification for the continuation of the schemes on Edge Lane.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the update be noted.
- 2) That the questions raised at the meeting be passed onto officers for response.

16. TRAFFORD ECONOMIC AND RECOVERY PLAN

The Executive Member for Covid-19 Recovery and Reform provided a brief overview to the report. Pointed out that Trafford could not deliver the plan by themselves and that the Council had been looking to work with partners to deliver the plan. The Executive Member for Covid-19 Recovery and Reform drew the Committee's attention to a number of initiatives that the Council were undertaking including the adult learning guide produced by the Council and the kick starter scheme, with twelve kick starters already placed by the Council. The Council were also working with Trafford Housing Trust to deliver the working wardrobe to help people access clothes to help them gain employment.

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Following the overview the Chair asked if any work was ongoing to bring together businesses based in Trafford park and if there was a group of providers that the Council were working with. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services informed the Committee that there was a group of providers in Trafford Park but they had not met frequently during the pandemic. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services offered to provide an update to the Committee via email setting out the different initiatives ongoing within Trafford Park. Councillor Axford asked for the work around having a low carbon Trafford Park to be included within the update.

Councillor Carter Asked about the shortage of long haul lorry drivers and whether Trafford was looking to do anything to improve those conditions. Councillor Freeman noted Councillor Carter's comments and how unfortunately it did not appear to be something that the government was looking to address.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That an update on the initiatives within Trafford Park be provided to Committee.

The meeting commenced at 6.32 pm and finished at 8.02 pm