

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

9 NOVEMBER 2022

PRESENT

Councillor D. Acton (in the Chair).

Councillors J.M. Axford, G. Carter, G. Coggins, W. Frass, K. Procter, R. Thompson, L. Walsh, B.G. Winstanley, S. Zhi and M.P. Whetton (ex-Officio)

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
Graeme Bentley	Director of Finance and Systems
Adrian Fisher	Director of Growth and Regulatory Services
Jez Tweed	Principal Sustainability and Climate Change Officer
Alexander Murray	Governance Officer

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D. Butt and D. Western

19. MINUTES

Councillor Axford noted that costing had not been received for Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller visits and that the finance update requested at the last meeting had also not been provided.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the minutes be agreed as an accurate record.
- 2) That the costings requested at the last meeting be chased up.

20. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made.

21. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

No questions were received.

22. DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS 2022/23

The Executive Member for Finance and Governance gave a brief introduction to the presentation beginning with the budget gap for the year which had increased to £8.25M. The presentation detailed the main areas of the Executive's draft budget proposals and the Executive Member for Finance and Governance highlighted the key assumptions within those proposals.

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Following the presentation Councillor Axford thanked Officers and Executive Member for the work they had done in preparing the draft budget and for the presentation. Councillor Axford then asked whether car parking fees were due to increase and whether consideration had been given car to fees being means tested as a way of increasing revenue. Councillor Axford also asked about the Council's position regarding discretionary services, for example the music service, and whether any of them would cease to be delivered by the Council.

The Executive Member for Finance and Governance responded to Councillor Axford that some answers would be provided at the meeting and others at the budget scrutiny sessions. The Executive Member then answered that consideration had not yet been given to means testing parking fines but that he would ask officers to investigate whether it could generate funds for the Council. With regards to street lighting the executive Member for Finance and Governance assured the Committee that officers would monitor the areas where lighting was to be reduced to ensure that the proposals did not impact public safety. The Executive Member of Finance stated that while discretionary services had been looked at it had not been with a view to reduce those services. The Committee were informed that the music service was struggling with capacity due to the high demand for the service.

Councillor Frass asked the Executive Member for Finance and Governance where the Council was up to on the lobbying programme. The Executive Member for Finance and Governance responded that the Council had approach local MPs and were looking to work with other stakeholders. The Director of Finance added that the role of the F20 group was not as vociferous as it had been during the previous year. The group was led by Leicestershire Council who had messaged the home secretary on two occasions regarding the funding the twenty Council's received. Councillor Whetton added that the letter sent to the Government was copied to Graham Brady MP by Councillor Whetton along with additional wording in support. Graham Brady MP informed Councillor Whetton that he had forwarded on the letter and would use his influence to support Trafford Council in their lobbying efforts. Both the Chair and the Executive Member for Finance and Governance thanked Councillor Whetton for his support in lobbying Graham Brady MP.

Councillor Winstanley asked whether the gap reported within the presentation was additional to the savings proposed and whether further details could be given as to the proposed changes to staff terms and conditions. The Executive Member for Finance and Governance confirmed that the budget gap was additional to the savings proposed and that the staff terms and conditions was with regards to vacancy management rather than changes to staff member's employment.

Councillor Procter noted the 8 reviews listed within the presentation and asked whether any of them were of higher priority than the others. Councillor Procter added that he felt that the enforcement activity would be a god area to focus upon to increase revenue. The Executive Member for Finance and Governance responded to the Council and stated that all 8 areas were being considered and with regards to traffic enforcement he could confirm that it would not be a congestion charge, but rather increased enforcement of existing parking restrictions. The Committee were informed that any monies made from parking

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enforcement would have to fund related Council activity, such as increasing active travel provision.

Councillor Carter asked for details regarding the realignment of the treasury management fund. The Executive Member for Finance and Governance stated that due to the increase in interest rates on the cash balance that the Council held was earning more interest than expected. The other area was looking at the bad debt provision but had not looked at that yet. The Director of Finance and Systems added that there was flexibility in the amount of money the Council put aside to ensure that they could meet their debt repayment requirements.

Councillor Whetton asked whether the 1% Adult Social Care Precept was cumulative or just a one off each year and what the indexation figure for inflation would likely be and what impact it would have upon business rates payments. The Director for Finance and Systems responded that the Social Care precept had been used for several years and that it went to the Adult Social care. Stated that could provide information about how much was being brought in by the precept for a band D property. The Director of Finance and System then gave a breakdown of the inflation index and business rates and how the government had been protecting business rates payers by making a payment to Council's to avoid increases on business rates. The Director of Finance and Systems added that Trafford Council's business rates situation was particularly volatile due to the large amount tied into the Trafford Centre.

Councillor Whetton asked whether the government compensation would be around a 10% increase. The Director of Finance and Systems responded that had figured around a 5% increase and reminded the Committee that the government compensation did not cover all business rates.

Councillor Thompson asked about the money that came from the increase in interest rates and whether the Council could use that money for frontline services. The Director of Finance and Systems responded that it was not borrowed money but rather cash held in accounts by the Council and that any additional income gained through interest could be used on services.

Councillor Coggins asked where the decrease of £1.5M from the asset investment fund came from. The Executive Member for Finance and Governance answered that it was due to the Council not meeting projections for new investments in previous years, so the projected income had decreased.

Councillor Coggins asked about the consideration of a congestion charge and parking levy similar to what had been done by Nottinghamshire Council. The Executive Member for Finance and Governance responded that the Executive were open to all suggestions and that would be something to look at. The Executive Member for Climate Change and Transport Strategy added that he was aware of the work that had been done in Nottinghamshire and that he was looking at the possibility of replicating it in Trafford.

Following the discussions, the Chair thanked the Executive Member for Finance and Governance and the Director of Finance and Systems for attending the

meeting. The Chair then confirmed that the first budget scrutiny session, to be held on the 29th November, would cover the savings from the place directorate, the Council reserves, and the investment management fund and the second session, to be held on the 1st December, was to be focused upon savings within Adult and Children's services.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the presentation be noted.
- 2) That the content of the Budget Scrutiny sessions be noted.

23. CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN PERFORMANCE

The Executive Member for Climate Change and Transport Strategy introduced the report which provided an overview of the work done towards the Councils Carbon Neutral Action plan. The Executive Member for Climate Change and Transport Strategy brought the Committees attention to section 2 of the report which detailed the work that had been completed so far with section 3 putting those projects in the wider context of the action plan and detailed projects that had fallen behind schedule. Section 4 detailed the difficulties the Council faced in achieving the action plan and why some of the actions were deemed to be at risk. The Executive Member for Climate Change and Transport Strategy concluded by stating that the report showed that many of the easy to achieve actions within the plan had been achieved and those remaining were those which required a larger effort to complete.

The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services added that the Council had come from a low base and had come to the stage where more effort was required to show returns. Section 4 of the report highlighted the difficulties that the area was facing in continuing to move forward. Director of Growth and Regulatory Services asked the Committee to note that there were many areas of the action plan that were reliant upon external bodies such as the delivery of Places for Everyone.

Following the introduction Councillor Axford stated that she was disappointed the public panel was no longer going ahead and she felt the Council needed to look into harnessing the energy of the public including Trafford youth cabinet. Councillor Axford noted that planning permission had been given to some large developments across the area which would have a high level of emission and asked how the Council could ensure future developments did not have large levels of emissions. Councillor Williams responded that the climate change commission was looking at communications and engagement with the public. There was a section of the website dedicated to climate change, but it was not listed on the front page of the website which would be addressed. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services added that getting the right planning policy in place was vital in impacting future developments and assured the Committee that places for everyone was going through the final stages and would be in place relatively soon with the Council local plan following on shortly after.

Councillor Carter asked whether anything was being done to ensure future developments had charging points and high EPC levels. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services stated that the local plan and updating of building

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regulations would assure that EPCs would be higher. The Principal Sustainability and Climate Change Officer added that the building regulations would require developments to be 30% better from 2022 and 80% better by 2025 the question was whether Trafford wanted developers to reach those targets sooner.

Councillor Carter asked about the enforcement of the EPCs which the report stated was limited in the short term and asked for more details as to why that was the case. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services responded that had been taking longer than it should have done to complete many of the standard building checks and the team had also been busy with the homes for Ukraine work. This had led to delays, but an additional team member was to be added which would provide the service with the required resource to commence EPC enforcement again.

Councillor Carter asked what the plans were for e-scooters within the area. The Executive Member for Climate Change and Transport Strategy stated that he would take this up with Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) and that he was aware of the roll out of e-scooters within Salford, which seemed to have been successful. The Executive Member for Climate Change and Transport Strategy informed the Committee that the first part of the B-Network cycle docking stations had been agreed for installation and they would start to see them put into the North of the Borough.

Councillor Carter noted that there were quite large misses in where the Council was supposed to be and asked whether there was a vision which would provide the needed resources to achieve the targets set. The Executive Member for Climate Change and Transport Strategy agreed with the points made by Councillor Carter. While the Council had done studies into actions that could be taken and found changes that would deliver the required reduction. However, the cost of those actions was billions of pounds which the Council did not have. The Principal Sustainability and Climate Change Officer added that the action plan was based upon the science and not the resources the Council had to achieve its goals. The Council, other authorities across the country, and the government were working on filling in the gap between what they have and what was needed. The Principal Sustainability and Climate Change Officer spoke of the gap between the plans local authorities had set in place and the government's plan for the country to be carbon neutral in 2050. Part of the work of local authorities involved working with partners across the region to look at ways to achieve as much as they could with the resources available to them.

Councillor Winstanley asked if the Committee could see the Excel Spreadsheet or gant chart which sat behind the dashboard and the Executive Member for Climate Change and Transport Strategy agreed to provide it.

Councillor Winstanley asked whether the Council was making the best use of the soft power the at its disposal within planning process to address these problems. The Executive Member for Climate Change and Transport Strategy felt that more could be done to champion the good work that was already being done and gave some examples of work being done across Greater Manchester and Trafford. The Executive Member for Climate Change and Transport Strategy also stated that he

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wanted to see more meaningful engagement of the private sector in the Trafford Climate Emergency and Air Quality Commission.

Councillor Coggins noted the report spoke about the inclusion of the carbon reduction targets on council reports but so far that section had just been used to list the positive climate impacts of work and not the carbon increases they would bring. The Executive Member for Climate Change and Transport Strategy agreed with Councillor Coggins point and stated that it was a new measure, which officers were still working out how to complete, and it would improve going forward. The Principal Sustainability and Climate Change Officer added that those impacts needed to be given similar weight as the financial and legal implications but there was a lack of the required expertise for assessments to be carried out.

Councillor Zhi asked about the measures that had been put in on public buildings, whether there were any financial benefits to the works that had been done, and whether there were any further plans to extend the programme further. The Executive Member for Climate Change and Transport Strategy spoke about this was part of a national decarbonisation scheme and offered to send more information to the Councillor after the meeting.

Councillor Axford asked for the communications strategy for the Action plan. The Principal Sustainability and Climate Change Officer agreed to send that through and the Greater Manchester Action Plan as well to provide a regional context.

Councillor Walsh asked whether there was any push back on producing highly efficient housing from developers. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services responded that the largest changes would be seen as the new regulations came into force as it meant that developers were on a level playing field rather than developers who chose to have higher standards than others reducing their profitability compared to their competition. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services agreed with Councillor Winstanley's point that it was worth putting the questions out to developers to see how they respond.

Councillor Walsh asked for clarity around the tonnage for waste recycling. The Principal Sustainability and Climate Change Officer responded that they could change the way that it was reported to show total tonnage rather than percentages. The Executive Member for Environmental Services added that the recycling rate was on the rise across the borough and GM. Spoke about the recent Trafford campaign around grey bins being of the right size for properties to encourage recycling. The Committee were also informed that nothing in Trafford went to landfill.

Councillor Walsh asked how other emissions, such as methane, were figured into the action plan. The Principal Sustainability and Climate Change Officer responded that when looking at those emissions they were factored into the figures in carbon dioxide equivalents.

The Chair concluded the discussions by requesting that regular updates on the action plan be sent to Committee and that the Committee receive the documents for Trafford Climate Emergency and Air Quality Commission meetings.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That the Excel Spreadsheet with the data behind the indicators be shared with the Committee.
- 3) That information on the impact of the decarbonisation project be shared with Councillor Zhi after the meeting.
- 4) That the communications plan for the Action Plan and the Greater Manchester Action Plan be shared with the Committee.
- 5) That the Committee is to receive regular updates of the progress of the action plan and documents for Trafford Climate Emergency and Air Quality Commission meetings.

24. PLACING GREEN SPACES INTO FIELDS IN TRUST

The Executive Member for Environmental Services introduced the report which was a follow on from a report that had been given at the previous meeting. The report detailed the resources that it would take to put all the green spaces into fields of Trust. Given the resource cost for putting green spaces into fields in trust the Executive Member recommended that the Council continue to use the range of protections available and place green spaces into Fields in Trust where it was identified that was the best option for protection.

Councillor Coggins noted the resources required and the response provided by the Executive Member for Environmental Services but felt that the sites selected for Fields in Trust were not always the best one. Spoke about the Cow fields that the council were building on as an example of a site that would have been protected. In response The Executive Member for Environmental Services spoke about the sites that had been chosen and noted that they were three distinct sites.

Following discussions, the Chair concluded that the recommendation of the Committee would be to not rule out the use of fields in Trust to protect any areas of land however, the resource requirement meant that it was not feasible for the Council to put all green spaces into fields of Trust and so the Council should continue to use a range of measures to protect its green spaces.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That the Committee's recommendation be fed back at the next Council meeting.

25. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee were informed that the Task and Finish Group on Events at Old Trafford Football Ground were working on a survey for members of the public to fill out to gain their views. The Task and Finish Group would also be looking to get views of GMP, Manchester United, and Amey Officers, along with other local stakeholders. Councillor Carter added that the survey was de to be published on Friday or the following Monday.

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Councillor Winstanley spoke about the Disability Access report and how the Executive had given a detailed response to point 2 and 3 of the report but not point one. Councillor Winstanley then asked for an email to be sent from the Committee asking for a further response from the executive covering point 1 of the report, which was agreed.

The Chair noted that a second report was to go to the Executive in December and asked that it come to the Committee. Councillor Axford asked that it be added to the agenda for the Committee meeting in March.

Councillor Zhi asked if the Climate change action plan could be considered again in March.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the updates be noted.
- 2) That an email from the Committee be sent requesting a detailed response to point one of the Disability Access Task and Finish Group report.
- 3) That the Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller follow on report to the Executive be shared with the Committee.
- 4) That the items raised be added to the work programme.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and finished at 8.32 pm