



TRAFFORD COUNCIL

AGENDA PAPERS FOR SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: Tuesday, 16 January 2024

Time: 6.30 pm

Place: Committee Rooms 2 & 3, Trafford Town Hall, Talbot Road, Stretford M32
0TH

A G E N D A	PART I	Pages
1. ATTENDANCES		
To note attendances, including Officers, and any apologies for absence.		
2. MINUTES		1 - 30
To receive and, if so determined, to agree as a correct record the Minutes of the meetings held on 10 July 2023, 12 July 2023, and 20 September 2023.		
3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST		
Members to give notice of any interest and the nature of that interest relating to any item on the agenda in accordance with the adopted Code of Conduct.		
4. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC		
A maximum of 15 minutes will be allocated to public questions submitted in writing to Democratic Services (democratic.services@trafford.gov.uk) by 4 p.m. on the working day prior to the meeting. Questions must be relevant to items appearing on the agenda and will be submitted in the order in which they were received.		
5. WEEDING PROGRAMME, RE-WILDING AND GREEN SPACES REVIEW		31 - 46
To receive a report from the Head of Highways, Transportation and Greenspaces and the Greenspace and Streetscape Operations Manager.		
6. ALLOTMENTS UPDATE		47 - 52

To receive a report from the Head of Climate Change and Sustainability.

7. **BUDGET SCRUTINY REPORT** 53 - 58

To consider and agree a report of the Chair of the Committee.

8. **EVENTS AT OLD TRAFFORD TASK AND FINISH GROUP INTERIM REPORT** To Follow

To consider the interim report.

9. **WORK PROGRAMME** 59 - 66

To consider the work programme for the remainder of the municipal year.

10. **URGENT BUSINESS (IF ANY)**

Any other item or items which, by reason of special circumstances (to be specified), the Chair of the meeting is of the opinion should be considered at this meeting as a matter of urgency.

11. **EXCLUSION RESOLUTION (REMAINING ITEMS)**

Motion (Which may be amended as Members think fit):

That the public be excluded from this meeting during consideration of the remaining items on the agenda, because of the likelihood of disclosure of "exempt information" which falls within one or more descriptive category or categories of the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A, as amended by The Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, and specified on the agenda item or report relating to each such item respectively.

SARA TODD

Chief Executive

Membership of the Committee

Councillors D. Acton (Chair), J. Holden (Vice-Chair), J.M. Axford, G. Carter, G. Coggins, W. Frass, D. Jarman, W. Jones, M.J. Taylor, L. Walsh, B.G. Winstanley, D. Butt (ex-Officio) and D. Western (ex-Officio).

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Further Information

For help, advice and information about this meeting please contact:

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This agenda was issued on **Monday, 8 January 2024** by the Legal and Democratic Services Section, Trafford Council, Trafford Town Hall; Talbot Road, Stretford, Manchester, M32 0TH

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SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

10 JULY 2023

PRESENT

Councillor D. Acton (in the Chair).

Councillors J. Holden (Vice-Chair), J.M. Axford, G. Coggins, W. Frass, W. Jones, L. Walsh, B.G. Winstanley and D. Butt (ex-Officio)

In attendance

Dave Russell	Chief Fire Officer, GMFRS
Carlos Meakin	Assistant Chief Fire Officer, GMFRS
Simon Wood	GMFRS
Dave Pike	Fire Brigade Union Representative
Stephen James	Head of Strategic Growth
Alexander Murray	Governance Officer

Also Present

Councillors Ennis, Gilbert, Hartley, and Newgrosh.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G. Carter, D. Jarman, M.J. Taylor, and D. Western.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made.

2. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

No questions were received.

3. GMFRS FIRE COVER REVIEW

The Chair introduced the meeting and the structure of the meeting with the Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS) providing a presentation then questions and answers then FBU questions and answers and the Committee to discuss how they would then respond to the consultation.

The Chief Fire Officer delivered the presentation with the Assistant Chief Fire Officer and the Committee were informed that the fire cover review was done every four years to ensure resources were used in most efficient ways. The review included all fire stations covered by GMFRS. The Committee were asked to note the review was not to deliver a reduction or increase but rather a re-allocation of existing funding. Explained that looked at the service and how the changes would impact response times across the areas. GMFRS could have decided to propose a no change review, but The Chief Fire Officer was of the opinion that the changes proposed offered a better service to the people of Greater Manchester as a whole.

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As the funding would increase prevention services, introduce two new enhanced rescue stations, and increase the fleet by two fire vehicles.

Members were shown the expected changes in the average response times across Trafford and Sale and The Chief Fire Officer noted that the times were averages and recognised the issues faced by residents in Partington.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer then gave a detailed look into the recommendations that would directly impact Trafford. Explained how the day shift pattern would work with the service being the same from 08:00 – 18:00 and a night on call service from 18:00 – 08:00. The Committee were informed of how the rota system worked and The Assistant Chief Fire Officer assured Members that it was a service pattern which had worked well in other areas of the region. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer informed the committee that the new system greatly reduced the number of staff required from 28 to 13. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer explained why Sale station was chosen which included the low number of night-time incidents (3rd Lowest in GM), the low number of Night-Time Life Risk incidents (3rd Lowest in GM), and the low number of Serious life risk incidents (4th Lowest I GM). The Committee were informed that in addition to low level of risk also Sale Fire Station also had a strong level of support from other fire stations within a 10-minute response area.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer then went through the benefits of the proposals for staff which included being family friendly, improved life/work balance, and an attractive remuneration package. The Committee were then asked to look at the wider benefits of the proposed changes to make the service more robust across the conurbation which included two additional fire trucks in Manchester Central and Moss Side. The resources the proposals would add to the service were not fixed but worked as mobile elements of the rescue system and two new vehicles would add a lot of additional robustness to the service. The additional vehicles would be of particular use given the increase in high rise towers within the Manchester city centre where fires required a minimum of 5 trucks compared to 3 trucks for a standard residential property.

Following the presentations opened to questions from the Committee Members and Ward Councillors in attendance.

Councillor Hartley and the Chair asked questions whether the 4-minute time for the night crew to get to the Station were acceptable, what the outlier response times were, and how the 4 minutes had been measured. The Chief Fire Officer detailed how the night crew got to the station and state that the 4-minute response time was a requirement of the model and, if the proposals were approved, GMFRS would report the times back to Scrutiny or the Council to assure them the targets were being met. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer provided more detail on how the times had been calculated informing the Committee that the figures were based upon 10 million data points from vehicles to assess average road speeds. The Chief Fire Officer added that if GMFRS could not find 13 firefighters who lived within the 4-minute radius then they would not go ahead with the model.

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The Chair noted that it still added 4 minutes to the response time which was a significant change. The Chief Fire Officer noted that the changes did have a risk associated with them, but he felt that the risks were outweighed out by the benefits to the whole system.

Councillor Gilbert asked how often the 13 members of staff were needed to be available and whether the 17.5% uplift was to account for that availability. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer responded explained what the 17.5% uplift was for and how the shift patterns would work.

Councillors Gilbert and Jones both expressed their concerns about safety and thought the 4-minute response time was unattainable.

Councillor Winstanley asked about the challenge of the additional times for areas such as Partington. The Chief Fire Officer responded that when looking at the overall impact on response time it did not seem worth doing but he assured the Committee that the advantages of having two additional fire engines more than made up for the additional risks in the areas affected.

Councillor Walsh asked what positive responses had been received from the consultation. The Chief Fire Officer responded that the majority of responses received were negative.

Councillor Ennis asked if GMFRS had tried to meaningfully engage with those not digitally available. The Chief Fire Officer responded that GMFRS had reached out to leaders in communities to contact as many people as possible.

Councillor Frass noted that day crews also had reduced times at weekends with people being at home from 13:00 and the impact Manchester united home games would have on the response times. Councillor Frass then asked for a case study from an area with a similar population density. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer responded that the response times would be based on the best data available and if it turned out that they could not be met then they would not proceed with the proposals. The Chief Fire Officer added that they did not have any examples in GM but mentioned two examples in Lancashire which had similar population density and had had the model in place since 1991.

Councillor Axford noted that it was unlikely there would be enough firefighters living within the 4-minute radius given the cost of property near the sale station and asked if GMFRS had considered future risks such as increased flooding and wildfires. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer responded that GMFRS were looking to upskill staff, purchasing additional powered vehicles, and introduce a controlled burn team to meet those risks going forward. The Committee were asked to note that even though the population density had doubled in GM the number of incidents had not increased due to changes in lifestyle and peoples fire safety awareness.

Councillor Newgrosh noted that used three years' worth of data and at least of one of those years was not a normal year. Councillor Newgrosh also noted that Blue light data was used when the firefighters would not be using blue lights to get to the station. Councillor Newgrosh then asked whether if firefighter could not get there in time would four rather than five firefighters go would the engine go. The

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Chief Fire Officer answered can go with four but dependent on who was late as the driver had to be there.

Councillor Coggins asked whether the changes are beneficial or just making tough decisions due to lack of government funding. The Chief Fire Officer responded not about funding genuinely felt that the changes considered had a low risk due to the rewards the service and areas would gain.

Councillor Coggins asked whether the average was mean or median. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer responded that it was a median. The Chief Fire Officer expressed that GMFRS had been asked questions about response times from Andrew Western MP and were working on the data which would also be shared with the Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Coggins asked how many people lived within the 4-minute boundary The Assistant Chief Fire Officer responded that GMFRS had 22 and some of them had already expressed interest in working at Sale after the changes.

Councillor Holden noted that there were fire stations from Altrincham and Stretford and asked when if it happened at a night would those stations respond before the sale station was activated. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer responded that it would depend on which could respond quickest and how many were needed to work on the fire.

Councillor Hartley noted that only three pumps were available across the three stations in Trafford and that taking one down meant there were not enough to deal with residential fires. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer responded that the system was fluid with pumps constantly changing placement as they responded to call outs, community work, etc.

The Chair thanked the representatives of GMFRS for their presentation and answers to Members questions. The Chair informed the GMFRS representatives that following the meeting the Committee would submit their response to the proposals as part of the consultation.

[Note - The Assistant Chief Fire Officer, The Chief Fire Officer, Simon Wood left the room]

[Dave Pike - Fire Brigade Union entered the room.]

The Fire Brigade Union (FBU) representative informed the Committee that he had been a firefighter for 26 years and told the Committee that he did not want to see staffing reduced at any station. The FBU felt there was a way for GMFRS to achieve the service improvements by making use of the current staffing structures through the management of how training was undertaken.

The FBU Representative informed the Committee that responses were already up 13% on the previous year. The FBU agreed with what the Fire Chief was trying to achieve but they felt there was a better way it could be achieved. The FBU Representative Informed the Committee that Sale had double the number of responses of the other day crew in GMFRS and the Committee were asked to

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note that were not a range of choices from the review with only one option provided for people to comment upon. The FBU Representative spoke about the increases in the built-up neighbourhood and told the Committee that the main responses were road traffic accidents. The Committee were asked to note that there was the potential for conversations with the GM Mayor as to whether more engines could be provided without losing firefighters.

The Chair asked the FBU Representative to provide the Committee with an overview of the alternative options. The FBU representative then outlined the FBUs proposals which related to training of firefighters which often require firefighters to go off site and require others to cover them to ensure all stations were fully crewed, so it did not impact engine availability. The FBU thought that there was a better way to organise and deliver the training which would save as much as the GMFRS proposals without losing any firefighters or capacity.

Councillor Coggins was surprised that GM only area buying more engines going against the grain and asked whether doing so at the loss of staff was the right thing to do. The FBU Representative felt that GMFRS proposals were innovative and welcomed that they were looking to increase the fleet. If GMFRS proceeded with the alternative method of delivery suggested by FBU then those proposals would benefit the region greatly.

Councillor Coggins asked whether an engine going out with 4 rather than 5 firefighters had a large impact on their effectiveness. The FBU Representative informed the Committee that he had been in a situation where an engine had a crew of 4 rather than 5 and would not recommend 4 but would not delay a response for waiting for the fifth crew member and definitely not head out with less than 4.

Councillor Coggins asked whether FBU had a view on likelihood of getting the 13 staff within the 4-minute response time radius. The FBU Representative felt that it would be unachievable.

Councillor Ennis asked whether there were lessons to be learnt from how GMFRS had conducted the consultation process. The FBU Representative felt that the consultation had been rushed and the identification of alternate ways of achieving the same outcomes could have been done a lot earlier. The FBU Representative spoke about the importance of involving the unions from the beginning of the process, which had not been done this time. Councillor Ennis asked whether the alternative option proposed by the Union would be offered. The FBU Representative hoped that GMFRS would take the time to review the validity of the Union's proposals.

The Chair asked about the response time to Partington and whether the additional 4 minutes put Partington residents in danger. The FBU Representative agreed that the additional four minutes did put residents lives in danger and spoke of his personal experience of taking 10minutes to respond to a call, which would be the time Partington would have, and knowing it was too long.

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Councillor Axford asked whether the FBU proposal kept the level of training but changed how it was delivered. The FBU Representative stated that it would maintain the level of training but would do so by using onsite resources rather than having people going off site to train.

Councillor Gilbert asked whether there was a prescribed amount of training. The FBU Representative answered that there was but there were different types of training available and the FBU felt that there should be more practical training and less pc-based training, which was the training that took people off site.

The Chair asked whether recommendation of a pause on the consultation would be backed by the FBU. The FBU Representative responded that he felt it would be a good recommendation.

Councillor Winstanley welcomed the alternative proposal and wanted to have it captured within the Committee's response to the consultation.

The Chair noted that the four minutes for firefighters to get to the station was an issue and the concerns needed to be reflected in the Committee's response.

Councillor Frass proposed that the Committee reject the proposals of the fire service and ask that alternative proposals be produced.

Councillor Axford felt that additional information was required and agreed that should reject the proposals on the current position.

The Chair then moved the recommendation to reject the proposals and it was agreed. The Chair informed the committee that the Leader was also putting a response together and so wanted the Committees response ASAP.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the presentation by GMFRS be noted.
- 2) That the update from the FBU representative and alternative proposal be noted.
- 3) That the Committee reject the proposals of GMFRS.
- 4) That the Committee submit a response to the GMFRS Consultation.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 p.m. and finished at 9.07 p.m.

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

12 JULY 2023

PRESENT

Councillor D. Acton (in the Chair).

Councillors J.M. Axford, G. Coggins, W. Frass, W. Jones, M.J. Taylor, L. Walsh and B.G. Winstanley.

In attendance

Councillor Adshead	Executive Member for Highways, Environmental, and Traded Services
Chris Morris	Director of Highways, Transport, and Environment
Helen Ashcroft	Head of Resources and Waste

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Holden, G. Carter, D. Jarman, D. Butt and D. Western.

4. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE 2023/24

RESOLVED: That the membership be noted.

5. COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE 2023/24

RESOLVED: That the Committee Terms of Reference be noted.

6. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held 8th March 2023 be agreed as an accurate record.

7. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made.

8. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

No questions were received.

9. AMEY 7 YEAR REVIEW

The Executive Member for Highways, Environmental, and Traded Services introduced the item and spoke of the developments made over the last few years highlighting how the contract had moved from being a self-monitored to having a client team in place who oversaw the contract. There had been a wide range of improvements made around communications and ensuring messages went out regarding all changes to services that were relevant to residents, Members, and stakeholder groups.

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The Director of Highways, Transport, and Environment then went through the presentation which had been circulated as part of the agenda. The presentation covered the context, an overall summary analysis, service by service review, and the next steps and outline of the revised service.

The Committee were informed that the 7-year review had looked at the options within the contract, the lessons learned during the first 7 years, and changes in the environment, technology, and services to ensure the contract was fit for purpose. The review had taken over a year to complete and during that time a number of changes had been brought in to improve service delivery and monitoring. The Director of Highways, Transport, and Environment recognised the next seven years would bring a number of additional challenges for the service especially around the management of highways and addressing the impacts of climate change. The review had taken a strategic approach to ensure services were viewed, monitored, and delivered in a realistic way. The Committee were shown the 5 strategic goals identified by the review, the new structure that had been created, and the processes developed to deliver those priorities.

The Director of Highways, Transport, and Environment stated that he felt the work over the last few years had stabilised the services and the next stage was to build upon that foundation. During the review process Amey had invested within the partnership by updating and improving their IT systems to improve data capture, monitoring, and communication. A lot of work had also been put into improving the client/provider relationship to ensure it was collaborative rather than adversarial. The Committee were provided with an overview of the changes made to the governance arrangements of the contract and increased transparency of Amey's activities and were assured the changes would deliver improved services to residents, members, and other stakeholders.

The Committee were shown a slide detailing the changes made to the refuse service, which included the implementation of computer systems to track bin crews in real time and respond when issues arose. Changes had been made to the bin collections across Trafford and additional changes were to be introduced around Christmas 2023 to ensure all bins were collected within 3-day period over the festive holidays. The Committee were shown a slide displaying the improvement in project delivery along with details of the next steps for refuse collection. The next slide showed the reduction in complaints received about the refuse collection service.

The Director of Highways, Transport, and Environment provided detail about the monitoring of the contract. The Council had agreed a process with Amey whereby Management Performance Indicator (MPI) targets could be added and if targets were not met escalated to KPIs with fiscal penalties added. This additional flexibility allowed the contract to change to address the evolving needs of the borough.

The Director of Highways, Transport, and Environment informed the Committee of the new systems that had been brought in alongside new decision-making processes to ensure the systems delivered real change. The Committee were provided with an example of how the new computer systems and having

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consistent staffing for the bin service had improved the performance of rounds. The Committee were assured that the new data collection methods, which evidenced when and where work had been done, would guarantee the service continued to improve.

The Director of Highways, Transport, and Environment informed the Committee that the service had a large carbon footprint both from the vehicles within the service and the materials used. The Refuse Collection Vehicles (RCVs) used by the service were on a seven-year contract so they would need to be replaced with new technology in phases. The services roadmap to carbon zero was displayed and the Director of Highways, Transport, and Environment highlighted the key elements, which included schemes to increase biodiversity within the borough. All the vehicles, apart from RCVs, were moving towards being electrical. With the RCVs the Council were looking at a range of options to meet the needs of the service. While Trafford was leading the GM authorities in EV charging the Council was aware that more needed to be done. One area under consideration was the utilisation of streetlighting for EV charging, but this was in the early stages. With regards to green spaces the Director of Highways, Transport, and Environment stated that the Council were taking a holistic approach by identifying what the Council was able to do and then working with Friends of Parks groups to ensure it had the greatest impact. There was a total of eleven green flag parks across Trafford and the ambition was to improve green spaces across the borough further.

The Council were looking at ways to bring more funding into Trafford and ensure that money was spent within the area. A new incentivisation mechanism was being introduced to the contract to encourage Amey to take on additional work to increase their level of funding. The Director of Highways, Transport, and Environment informed the Committee about the development of the projects team who helped Amey to plan ahead to identify and bid for funding.

The presentation concluded on the benefits of the changes for Trafford Residents which included improved communications and how that improvement would continue with the introduction of the new CRM system. A report was due to the Executive in September which would request delegated powers to complete the seven-year review.

Following the presentation Councillor Coggins noted that the carbon neutral action plan was not mentioned and that Amey's goal for Carbon Neutral was 2040 whereas the GMCA's target was 2038. The GMCA said that carbon offsetting should be used as a last resort and Amey were looking at 20% of emissions being offset. Councillor Coggins then asked how the differences in the carbon reduction targets would be reconciled. The Director of Highways, Transport, and Environment responded that the aim of the contract was to deliver projects that would dovetail with the Council's plans for carbon reduction. The Committee were assured that the carbon reduction plans did not involve offsetting but were focused on removing carbon from the services processes. Amey monitored the carbon impact of materials used such as concrete, which the Council were not monitoring, and discussions were ongoing on how that information would impact the Council's approach to carbon reduction. The Director of Highways, Transport, and

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Environment stated that the goal was to identify actions within the contract to be achieved by 2030 which would ensure the Council were able to meet their carbon reduction targets.

Councillor Coggins asked about the TUPEE of waste minimisation team staff to the Council. In response the Committee were informed that two members of staff had been transferred to the Head of Resources and Waste's team and two more staff had been added to the team. Those staff were focused upon reducing waste and the Council had already seen an impact from their work. The team were continuing to look for suggestions or ideas how to reduce the amount of waste generated by households across Trafford and the Committee were asked to pass on any suggestions they had. The Executive Member for Highways, Environmental, and Traded Services added that a third person had been transferred over who was based within the Estates Department and they were working with the climate team. The Director of Highways, Transport, and Environment added that the service had moved to having two heads of service to enable the service to focus on recycling and active transport.

Councillor Coggins asked what alternative forms of transport had been considered by the service. The Director of Highways, Transport, and Environment informed the Committee that the service had looked at alternative vehicles such as two electric diggers and non-fossil fuel hand tools and looked at new electric alternatives. Spoke about the improvement in terms of emissions but also for staff with regards to the noise of the tools and the impact upon their hands and bodies.

Councillor Coggins asked for clarification as to when the contract began and the length of the contract. The Director of Highways, Transport, and Environment clarified that the contract started in 2015 and was initially for 15 years so would run until 2030 when there would be an option to extend.

Councillor Frass had spoken with frontline staff at LNQ and had been informed of a number of issues around collections at multiple occupancy properties which had led to LNQ collecting 288 tonnes of rubbish from properties over the previous year. Councillor Frass expressed that Amey seemed to have an overzealous approach to not collecting bins which lead to problems in multiple occupancy buildings, where the actions of one tenant meant the bins of all residents would not be collected. The Head of Resources and Waste responded to Councillor Frass and informed the Committee that she had regular meetings with L&Q as well as conducting sites visits at their buildings and she was disappointed that those issues had not been shared with the One Trafford Partnership (OTP). The Committee was assured that the service was aware of issues around multiple occupancy residencies and a process was in place to deal with contamination and missed collections at OTP's cost. The Director of Highways, Transport, and Environment spoke about the rubbish levy and the associated costs to the Council. This meant the service was focused upon reducing cross contamination and the increased capacity and stability within the team would help to achieve that.

The Executive Member for Highways, Environmental, and Traded Services spoke to the Committee about the working relationship between housing associations

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and the Council and how communication and collaboration had greatly improved in recent years. The Executive Member for Highways, Environmental, and Traded Services spoke about the issues caused by people parking and blocking access to bins crews and how this had increased with working from home and he informed the Committee of the measures Amey could take which included putting notes on cars, letters through doors, and in the most extreme cases Traffic Regulation Orders being put in place. The Executive Member then reiterated the request for Members to pass on information of any issues they were aware of.

Councillor Winstanley welcomed the approach taken by the Council as it recognised that there were real issues with the contract back in 2018, particularly with elements such as the contract being self-monitored. Councillor Winstanley then asked how long it would be before actions would be seen from new KPIs being introduced. The Director of Highways, Transport, and Environment responded that he expected to see an impact within a month of a new MPI being introduced. MPIs were new nonpunitive performance indicators which turned into the KPIs after a year. The Director of Highways, Transport, and Environment provided additional details about the new bin monitoring service and how it utilised live data to manage the routes and how the Head of Resources and Waste met with the managers on a weekly basis to discuss performance and any issues that had arisen. The Director of Highways, Transport, and Environment noted that there would always be some issues due to the scale of the service but if KPIs were not being met regularly then it was a systematic issue.

Councillor Axford asked whether the costs of the review were covered by Amey. The Director of Highways, Transport, and Environment answered that the costs were shared 50/50 between Amey. Only one consultant had been hired to perform the review with most of the costs being the result of legal charges and the time of the team.

Councillor Axford asked how the contract would be reviewed going forwards. The Director of Highways, Transport, and Environment informed the Committee that there were monthly reviews that fed into a monthly report which was submitted to both Amey and the Council. The systems being open meant the Council were able to access the same information as Amey at any point in time and the data available was strong enough to enable the OTP to make real changes. The Executive Member for Highways, Environmental, and Traded Services added that this was the start of the process and it was hoped the structures which had been put in place would continue to deliver improvement over the remainder of contract. The Executive Member for Highways, Environmental, and Traded Services asked the Committee to note the amount of work that had been done and the difficulty of conducting the review while continuing to deliver the regular services and commended the officers for their work.

Councillor Axford asked whether confident the objectives had been met. In response the Director of Highways, Transport, and Environment were not at that point but had gone through the 5 strategic areas and now had the feeling that those outcomes were attainable.

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Councillor Walsh asked whether there was any appetite to involve the public in the process, whether Amey could come along to the Committee at a later date to speak to Members, and finally whether Amey were able to take on commercial refuse contracts to bring in more income. The Director of Highways, Transport, and Environment responded to the first question by stating that the intention was to share the work with the public and to do as much as possible to improve the Amey and OTP brand reputation within the area. With regards to the second question the Director of Highways, Transport, and Environment informed the Committee that the account director of Amey would have liked to attend but he was not available.

The Head of Resources and Waste informed the committee that there were commercial contracts which provided an opportunity for Amey to make more money but they were large contracts which came with big costs associated in begin able to deliver them. Instead, the OTP were focused on working with local small businesses and finding ways to prevent costs associated with those businesses, such as fly tipping, and helping them to recycle.

The Chair welcomed the outcome of the review which sounded very positive and while it was clear improvements had been made, the service had been in a horrible position in 2018 and the Chair wanted to see it get to a place where it delivered a good level of service consistently for Trafford residents. The Chair noted the large number of bullet points within the presentation listing what the service was to achieve and stated that it was crucial that monitoring was done to ensure the service delivered them. To that end the Chair held that Scrutiny should have a role in monitoring the contract, with the method of how that would be achieved to be agreed between Scrutiny and the service.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the presentation be noted.
- 2) That Committee Members are to contact Officers with suggestions on how to reduce household waste within Trafford.
- 3) That an approach for Scrutiny to monitor the delivery of the contract to be agreed between the Committee and the One Trafford Partnership.

10. LEADER OF THE COUNCILS PRIORITIES FOR 2023/24

The Leader spoke through the key strategic aims for the year. There had been a relaunch of the Councils strategic partnership the day before and the Leader spoke of the importance of working in partnership to achieve the Councils goals. One of the key areas of discussion at the launch was the cost-of-living crisis and the challenge of tackling poverty within Trafford. The Amey 7-year review was another key area of focus for the Council. The outcomes of the review would help to ensure that those services delivered for Trafford residents and the Leader welcomed the input of Scrutiny to ensure that was achieved.

The Council had recently completed the recruitment for the position of Head of Climate Change along with an officer in support. The Leader had been named

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green city region lead for the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and he would utilise the role to look at examples from across the region and country to bring in new initiatives and examples of best practice to Trafford. Other areas of work around climate change included the Electric Vehicle charging point roll out, the continued support for play streets, expanding active transport across the borough, district heat networks, and expanding solar energy generation across the borough.

The Leader informed the Committee of the completion of the Councils Culture Strategy which would help the Council invest in its residents to build upon the area's rich cultural heritage. As part of the strategy additional staff would be appointed with sufficient skills to help recognise the talents within in the area and to help people to reach their potential and to help residents express their culture.

The Leader spoke to the Committee about the large number of developments that were ongoing and planned across Trafford. Development was already underway in the Grafton Centre, Sale Magistrates Court, and the Stretford Master Plan. More was upcoming with the plans for Urmston Town Centre and with the Fermi due to submit a planning application which would offer new opportunities in the area. The Council were also looking at a vision for waterside to maximise the land that was available there.

The final area the Leader drew the Committee's attention to was Improving the health outcomes for young people across the borough. This was strategic priority for the Council to deliver the best possible start for children and young people and the Leader spoke of the importance of working with the Locality Board to deliver that priority. The Leader wanted to explore how to improve outcomes for all children and young people across the area in the aftermath of COVID.

Councillor Jones thanked the Leader for the update and noted the school streets programme and asked how the Council planned to expand the programme. The Leader responded that the Council was keen to expand the programme and would be looking to make improvements from the lessons learned from the trails. Work was ongoing to identify funding for the programme which would help remove barriers for young people to be able to access school in an active way.

Councillor Jones asked whether culture included sports culture. The Leader confirmed that sports and leisure were key parts of the strategy as Trafford had a huge cultural sports heritage that needed built upon. A key element to deliver the strategy successfully was having an Executive Member focused on this area and the Leader was confident that the correct Executive Member was leading on this in Councillor Hynes.

Councillor Jones asked whether the Leader felt the Amey 7-year review would deliver the improvements listed within the presentation the Committee had received. The Leader responded to Councillor Jones that the review had greatly improved the situation in Trafford and that he was confident the contract would deliver high quality services for Trafford residents going forward. The Leader encouraged members to visit the depot as it helped to bring it all to life and helped you to see and understand the changes that had been made.

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Councillor Jones final question related to how the Council would deliver improved mental Health services for Children and Young People. The Leader agreed that mental health and access to support had a huge impact upon young people's health especially given the stresses that modern lifestyle puts on young people and he assured the Committee that the Council would be looking at access, prevention, and wrap around support.

Councillor Walsh asked what the strategic partnership would look like in the next year. The Leader responded that that it would be a true partnership approach and not Council led. Work was still ongoing to agree the precise structure of the partnership and the Leader stated he was happy to bring an update on that to Scrutiny when the plans had been fleshed out.

The Chair noted the comments about ensuring children and young people had the best start to life and spoke of the great asset the Council had in Gorse Hill Studios. The Chair expressed that there was a need to encourage the establishment of similar services across the borough to address the gaps left by the closure of children's centres and community centres. The Leader agreed with the points made by the Chair and informed the Committee that he had spoken with staff from Gorse Hill Studios about the importance of having those community hubs where young people could go. The Leader added that it was important to ask young people what they wanted and needed and to listen to the responses that they provided.

RESOLVED: That the Leader's priorities be noted.

11. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24

The Chair introduced the item and informed those in attendance that the Committee had already met informally to raise possible items for the year. The Committee were asked to note some items had been carried forward from the previous year, most notably the two task and finish groups. The Chair then went through the items listed on the priority list with the accessibility of Council services, issues around mould and damp, and the retrofitting of accommodation being of the highest priority to come to the Committee. The scrutiny of the Carrington Relief Road was a carryover from the previous year and would come routinely to the Committee.

Following the introduction Councillor Coggins put forward the LNQ and THT merger as an area for the Committee consider along with the Damp and Mould and Retrofitting as they all involved the Housing Association. Councillor Coggins also suggested that the Committee look at wildflower expansion, allotments, and food growing.

Councillor Jerrome stated that issues around access to public toilets had been brought to his attention by a number of community groups and residents and he asked whether the Committee could look at this at the scale of the problem. The Governance Officer suggested that the item fell more under the Health Scrutiny Committee's remit and that the Committee could recommend it to Health Scrutiny.

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The Chair agreed to take the action to refer the item to the Health Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Coggins suggested that The Items suggested by the Executive Member for Finance and Governance and the Director of Finance and System could be taken up by the Accounts and Audit Committee rather than the Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Walsh asked if the committee could look at the elements of the Amey contract with more in-depth reports on individual services. The Committee agreed with Councillor Walsh's suggestion and that it would be picked up within the ongoing monitoring of the Amey contract.

Councillor Coggins noted that there appeared to be a number of key themes within the items and suggested that Retrofitting and Damp and Mould could be covered together and the merger of THT and LNQ. The Chair agreed with Councillor Coggins suggestion and stated that those items would form the basis of the next agenda.

The Committee agreed that the items on the weeding programme, re-wilding and allotments would also be considered by the Committee together.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the suggestions for the work programme be noted.
- 2) That the topic of access to public toilets be suggested to the Health Scrutiny Committee.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 p.m. and finished at 8.57 p.m.

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SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

20 SEPTEMBER 2023

PRESENT

Councillor D. Acton (in the Chair).

Councillors J. Holden (Vice-Chair), J.M. Axford, G. Carter, G. Coggins, W. Frass, D. Jarman, W. Jones, M.J. Taylor, L. Walsh, B.G. Winstanley and D. Western (ex-Officio)

In attendance

Councillor James Wright	Executive Member for Housing and Advice
Adrian Fisher	Director of Growth and Regulatory Services
Suzanne Whittaker	Regulatory Services Manager
Nicola Lees	Team Leader for Housing Standards
Vicky Holland	Head of Special Projects and Sustainability at L&Q
Alyson Heald	Partnerships Director NW at L&Q
Conan McKinley	Director of Asset Management at Your Housing Group (YHG)
Scott Murray	Executive Director for Homes at Irwell Valley
Ed Hogarth	Head of Asset Management at Irwell Valley
Jon Worsley	Disrepair and Complex Repairs Manager at Mosscaire St. Vincents (MSV)
Matthew George	Group Director of Asset Management at Jigsaw Homes
John Addison	Governance Manager
Alexander Murray	Governance Officer

Also Present

Councillors Ennis and Newgrosh.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D. Butt

13. MINUTES

Councillor Carter raised concern over the minutes from the previous meetings not being available for this meeting. The Chair informed Councillor Carter that this was due to the close proximity of the two previous meetings and that these would be provided at the next meeting.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting's held 10th July and 12th July be received at the next meeting of the Committee.

14. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Executive Member of Housing and Advice informed the Committee that he was currently employed by one of the housing associations present.

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RESOLVED: That the declaration be noted.

15. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

No questions were received.

16. DAMP AND MOULD WITHIN THE TRAFFORD HOUSING STOCK

The Executive Member for Housing and Advice gave an introduction to why the issue of damp and mould had been brought to the Committee, and how recent cases had highlighted to the public and the government some of the poor housing standards that remained a part of people's everyday lives. This included a recent coroner report which attributed mould as a reason for death to an individual outside of the borough. He continued by saying that even though the Council does not manage any housing stock within the borough directly, this does not impede the Council's ability to take action against hazards within housing associations stock and reiterated the Council's commitment to do this. The Committee were provided with some of the statistics behind complaints the Council has received in the past 12 months in relation to housing standard. Most notable was of the 234 complaints made to the Council, 77 had been down to the issue of mould.

The Executive Member concluded by stating that he was committed to working with housing providers to tackle the issue despite the low levels of resource available to the Council.

The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services then spoke to the report that had been circulated with the agenda and informed the Committee of the level of social housing in the area. While the level of social housing in Trafford was lower than other areas it still represented a significant amount of the housing stock in the area. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services provided details of the work the Council had done in collaboration with housing providers and asked the Committee to note the responses by providers to the Governments legislation and the motion that had been passed by the Council to deal with mould. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services then moved on to discuss the Council's role as a housing regulator and the powers the Council had in this regard. The Committee were informed of the complaints received by the Council and how they often signified poor management of a property. The report outlined the process of how the powers were utilised and, like the Executive Member for Housing and Advice, highlighted that the Council had a number of tools that can be employed if it is deemed necessary to take formal action.

Councillor Western noted that section 3.7 mentioned an online form that residents had to fill in and asked if there was a paper version available. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services responded that the majority of forms received were submitted online although those who may have difficulty can go to a contact centre or a Council reception to report their issues.

Councillor Axford noted that the issue with damp and mould was linked to the cost-of-living crisis and the cost of energy and asked if the number of complaints of damp and mould has increased over the past year. The Team Leader for

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Housing Standards responded that only since last year was there a code in place for damp and mould, which means that the numbers could only now be recorded in the system. However, they did say that there had been a definite increase in complaints around damp and mould, and that this had been exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis.

Councillor Walsh asked what had been done within the Council since the coroner's report that would reassure the Committee that this was not likely to be repeated in Trafford. The Executive Member for Housing and Advice assured the Committee that the Executive was focused on tackling this issue and ensuring that high quality housing levels were maintained in the area so that all residents had a good quality, safe, and secure home. The officers who were employed in the area produced good work, but the Executive Member admitted that the Council would benefit from having a greater number of staff and resource to tackle the problem and that the Executive were going to lobby the Government requesting greater resources for this.

Councillor Carter noted that a large element of the problem was within the private sector and asked if there were any indication of their response to this issue and how they were treating it. The Team Leader of Housing Standards responded that generally in the first instance the Council would write to the landlord directly, giving them 28 days to conduct an inspection of the property. She ensured that the Council generally got a good response to these letters with the landlord enacting the changes themselves. If they do not engage with the housing standards, then organise a formal inspection of the property under the Housing Act.

Councillor Frass stated that he found it hard to believe that there were no category 1 or 2 issues and asked whether the Council planned to ask for a share of information on a more granular level from the housing associations. The Executive Member for Housing and Advice responded that a request had not been made but it was something that the Council could look at doing, but a discussion would need to be had first between the Executive Member and the Director for Growth and Regulatory Services' team, to see the sort of resource that would be required to take on such a big project. He also raised concern around time and availability of officers. The Director of Growth and Regulatory Services added that elements of this would be picked up as part of the letter to housing associations from the Secretary of State.

Councillor Winstanley asked about the long-promised changes to the housing regulations and whether this will see an end to some in the privately rented sector being reluctant to come forward and complain about conditions. He asked whether they had any cases of people coming to the Council out of fear of being evicted by their landlords. The Team Leader for Housing Standards responded that there were cases of people coming to the Council, saying they had an issue and do not want to contact their landlord, yet without their permission the Council cannot contact the landlord. However, she did say that the Council does get many people contact them, when they were moving out or had been evicted, to report an issue in the hope of stopping the issue of damp and mould for the next tenants.

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The Chair thanked the Executive Member for Housing and Advice and the Director of Growth and Regulatory Services for their information and engagement with the questions asked by the Councillors. The Chair moved forward to questions from Councillors for the representatives in attendance from the housing associations.

Councillor Walsh asked the housing associations what, since the coroners report, response had the housing associations given, what issues had been found, and what improvements had been made. He wanted to see an urgency from the housing associations of an understanding of the seriousness of the issue.

The Head of Special Projects and Sustainability at L&Q responded first, stating that a lot had been done. This included a separate damp and mould policy, which involved the completion of an assurance review which looked at what the policy said it will do compared to what was being done. This found that normally the work was being done, however, it did find some gaps, which were being rectified through work with residents living in those homes where gaps had occurred. Furthermore, more extensive training on damp and mould and how to prevent it had taken place in February and March 2023. There was also a review ongoing looking at the Standard Operating Procedure, ensuring that there was adequate follow through at 6- and 12-months, to ensure that an issue had been dealt with and that it was not reoccurring. Finally, she informed the Committee that the issue of damp and mould was now presented monthly to L&Q's Executive Board.

The Chair asked how many cases had been reported and dealt with in the past 12 months. The Head of Special Projects and Sustainability at L&Q responded that there were currently 150 open cases in Trafford, that stayed open until the work had been completed. She will supply the information for the number of completed cases after the meeting.

Councillor Walsh asked how many resident engagement groups there were in Trafford. The Head of Special Projects and Sustainability at L&Q did not have that information but would be able to share the information after the meeting. She informed the Committee that she had attended one, where 20 residents had been invited with only six attending.

Councillor Walsh asked about Board involvement and whether they felt they were taking it more seriously. The Head of Special Projects and Sustainability at L&Q responded that the Board was taking it much more seriously, actively seeking out solving the issues, with it being a regular item at Board meetings.

The Director of Asset Management at Your Housing Group (YHG) responded regarding their associations work that had been done through communication and engagement with residents, as well as the formation of a damp and mould task force, to specifically look at the issue, which was dedicated solely to the issue and was made up of staff with the required skill sets to deal with the problems. He also spoke about the Housing Associations IT system which had helped to manage problems that had been reported.

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The Chair asked how many families the group had worked with. The Director of Asset Management at YHG responded that they had worked with 199 families in the last 12 months.

The Group Director of Asset Management at Jigsaw Homes provided a similar response to the representative from YHG, informing the Committee that it had improved follow up on contacting residents after a case had been dealt with to ensure that no recurrence happened, and that there were no underlying issues with their building. They spoke about additional engagement between engineers and residents, which involved doing a walk around properties and assessing their quality regarding damp and mould. Furthermore, the Committee were made aware that they had had their records on damp and mould externally scrutinised. They finished by saying that they felt the group was in a much better position and on the front foot compared to 12 months ago.

The Executive Director for Homes at Irwell Valley told the Committee that the Irwell Valley Chief Executive did a call to action 12 months ago and had a spotlight review which had scrutinised the approach of the housing group. He also spoke about the desire to do more on the issue of damp and mould. He spoke to the complaints procedure which was in place and the lessons learned from it. He mentioned that Irwell Valley had recognised the need for stock condition checking, whilst also looking at utilising the other checks that they had to do, which involved gas and electricity. The Committee were informed of some additional funding that had been place in the housing quality fund which they had applied for and had helped to deal with a number of properties with damp and mould.

The Chair asked if they could provide information on the number of properties dealt with in the last year in comparison to previous years. This will be provided after the meeting.

Councillor Winstanley asked about the extra funding that could be applied for and what housing associations had to do to receive it. The Head of Asset Management at Irwell Valley explained that there was a £50M pot of funding at Greater Manchester (GM) level that could be applied for, Irwell Valley had applied for funding for around 991 properties with roughly half of those being in Trafford.

The Disrepair and Complex Repairs Manager at Mosscafe St. Vincent's (MSV) informed the Committee of their associations approach and the action taken within the last year. This had included taking a more data driven approach to dealing with damp and mould within the housing stock. The group had looked at expanding surveyors but also hiring a tenant liaison officer, which would work with tenants in order to identify any problems they may have had, such as in fuel poverty, which may impact the property.

Councillor Walsh thanked all of the representatives for their answers. He stated that he would like to hear more use of external auditors, as this was only mentioned by the representative from Jigsaw Homes. MSV responded that they had been through an external audit recently as well.

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Councillor Jones enquired about the figure of ongoing cases in MSV properties. The Disrepair and Complex Repairs Manager at MSV responded that there were ten new active cases, with 84 in the planned programme of works across the associations stock.

The Chair and Councillor Jones both asked if the data of active cases could be provided by all housing associations after the meeting, with Councillor Jones also hoping that the data will come back to Scrutiny in the future.

Councillor Frass noted that L&Q planned to deal with 20% of cases each year and whether this was going to be done nationwide or would it be on an area-by-area basis. Councillor Frass asked more widely to the housing associations, whether when looking at their plans to inspect homes, some of which the housing associations were setting themselves a target of 2029, if this was urgent enough.

The Disrepair and Complex Repairs Manager at MSV responded that they had a large amount of housing stock work to do but that there were a limited number of people who could do the work to a good standard. He felt that there had been a flooding of the market with lots of surveyors of questionable quality.

The Head of Special Projects and Sustainability at L&Q could not respond on where the 20% would cover each year at the meeting but can get back to the Committee. They stated that the commitment meant that every property had conditions survey every five years, with other members of staff going into properties much more often than just the 5 year reviews would suggest. The Partnerships Director NW at L&Q added further that any inspection was only a snapshot in time and so highlighted that it was important that there were open lines of communications for the customers, and looking at different triggers which can cause damp and mould to form.

Councillor Coggins asked how long it would take to train up the workforce to address the issue and asked what could be done to help the providers to meet the challenges.

The Executive Director for Homes at Irwell Valley responded that it was about having people come in who provided the quality as well as quantity. He raised the funding limitations and how would it help if not all associations were having to compete for the same pot of money, instead favouring adopting a long-term over a short-term review.

The Disrepair and Complex Repairs Manager at MSV said that it was about increasing training, which would lead to improved triage, which in turn would lead to an improved programme of works. He spoke about the changes at MSV, which had involved moving away from the call centre dealing with the majority of the triage. This was being replaced by a second point of triage, involving a higher trained team which looked at the information taken by the call.

Councillor Western asked how many homes were inspected for mould on an annual basis, and raised concerns similar to Councillor Frass around the time it will take to get round to every property in their housing stock.

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The Director of Asset Management at YHG responded that their association had surveyed 90% of properties but also do annual visits asking occupants about whether they had damp and mould. The YHG also had an external audit on damp and mould which performed very well.

The Head of Special Projects and Sustainability at L&Q stated that they had also had an annual review and did gas and electrical inspections on a yearly basis. The Ombudsman report did recommend for L&Q to get out to the properties and had given additional training and guidance to frontline staff.

The Executive Director for Homes at Irwell Valley informed the Board that they planned to get to 100% by 2025.

MSV had a common approach to the other associations. They did operate a process of looking back through their data to find the silence, taking a proactive plan to those who they do not hear from and adding them to the list to be contacted.

Councillor Ennis stated that he felt there was a stigma around reporting mould and asked whether any steps were being taken to deal with the issues.

The Executive Director for Homes at Irwell Valley had worked with residents around the language used within policy as well as that language used by staff to not increase stigma. They wanted to make tenants feel supported rather than judged when they raised a complaint.

The Disrepair and Complex Repairs Manager at MSV referred to the establishment of the Tenancy Liaison Officer and that the approach aligned with not blaming residents for the issues. They also spoke about the need for education for residents to help them to know what they were to do to avoid issues such as black mould.

Councillor Carter asked whether there were cases of damp and mould repeating and how that was captured and dealt with.

The Head of Special Projects and Sustainability at L&Q stated that L&Q had just brought this issue into their procedures, where if complaints had been received within 3 to 6 months of initial resolution, this will be escalated accordingly.

The Executive Director for Homes at Irwell Valley added that it linked into government guidance for Housing Associations to follow regarding follow up and timescales.

Councillor Jarman asked how many referrals from residents had been received and what action was taken.

The Director of Asset Management at YHG responded that there had been 199 and the cases vary from leaks and pipes to extraction fans or condensation. Guidance was then provided to residents to deal with this.

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The Executive Director for Homes at Irwell Valley said they would provide the data on this after the meeting.

Councillor Jarman asked whether housing associations did systematic inspections of their properties, and if so, was there any interventions that could be taken from this to deal with issues in a more efficient manner.

The Disrepair and Complex Repairs Manager at MSV responded that this was the ultimate goal of any housing association, but this would cost a lot of money to get to a point where you can have a pro-active rather than re-active response to the issues.

The Chair asked what resources each association had to put in to tackling this problem, and how many staff did they have to help deal with these issues.

The Director of Asset Management at YHG said that they were in the process of recruiting 16 operatives for the full organisation but that this was not straightforward as many housing associations were trying to hire the same people, particularly plasterers and roofers. He also said that they had a disrepair team made up of four people, three of which were para legals, as well as two surveyors. He did highlight that most of these resources were already within the team, and not necessarily new resources.

The Chair asked the final question on damp and asked whether the housing associations worked together on these issues of damp and mould or competed.

The Partnerships Director NW at L&Q responded that the GM call to action which had taken place and was responded to by all providers and how they worked well across the region especially around the issue of the supply chain and dealing with stigma.

The Executive Director for Homes at Irwell Valley informed the Committee of a project group meeting that was taking place the next day, as well as the Good Landlord Charter for Greater Manchester being established.

The Chair concluded by asking all housing associations to provide the data from the last year, in comparison to previous years, when this is available.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the information be noted.
- 2) That all the Housing Associations present provide data around how many completed cases of damp and mould were done in the past twelve months and how this is compared with previous years, when this is available.
- 3) That the Head of Special Projects and Sustainability at L&Q provide the information on the number of residents engagement groups they had in Trafford.
- 4) That all the housing association present provide the data of active cases of damp and mould when this data is available.

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- 5) That the Head of Special Projects and Sustainability at L&Q provide information on how the distribution of the 20% of cases a year will be managed.

17. RETROFITTING OF TRAFFORD HOUSING STOCK

The Chair started by highlighting that all the housing providers had provided the information prior to the meeting and asked each representative from the housing associations to provide an overview as to what they were doing with regard to retrofitting.

The Director of Asset Management at Your Housing Group (YHG) opened by saying that their associations approach had been to look at the funding available and operating a fabric first approach, which is effectively looking at insulation. YHG had been involved in the social housing de-carbonisation funding which been done in two waves so far. They had also looked at possible cavity wall insulation. At the time, YHG had over 1000 properties that needed to have their Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating upgraded to a C by 2030 and aimed to do so by 2029 with plans to put in a large amount of funding to achieve that.

The Head of Special Projects and Sustainability at L&Q stated that they had a similar approach and spoke about the application process which took a lot of work but resulted in the association being able to secure about £2.2M. She said that L&Q were starting assessments on their properties. L&Q currently had 2457 properties within Trafford that needed to be brought up to grade C, but with most at a grade D currently, the cost was not expected to be too much. The Head of Special Projects and Sustainability at L&Q assured the Committee that L&Q were generally in a good place for retrofitting at that time, and had a Sustainability manager in place in the Northwest that was helping L&Q to achieve this success. The Committee were reminded that it is the Government target to have all properties should at least an EPC grade C by 2030.

The Executive Director for Homes at Irwell Valley also informed the committee of their focus upon addressing getting houses to a EPC rating C, with their current average sitting at a high grade D. They were currently in the process of trialling a new approach to improvements and spoke about the improved ratings of their new builds.

The Disrepair and Complex Repairs Manager at Mosscafe St. Vincent's (MSV) informed the Committee that in Trafford, most of their properties were already at a grade C EPC rating, with 2030 the target date to have all up to standard. He explained the delay as being down to the remaining houses being properties with specific issues, which were going to take more thought to sort. He emphasised that these properties were retrofitted correctly, as if they were not, you risk mould forming.

The Group Director of Asset Management provided a similar response to the other housing authorities, with Jigsaw Homes operating a similar approach.

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Councillor Winstanley asked the housing associations how much time and effort was being spent on applying for funding. The Head of Special Projects and Sustainability at L&Q stated that it was very arduous task, which took up a considerable amount of time to bid for such funding and has its own project team. MSV responded that housing associations were a group fighting over pots of money. YHG would like the process of applying for funding to become much simpler and feels that this conversation was coming.

Councillor Coggins expressed her disappointment by the lack of urgency around retrofitting and felt more should be being done. Councillor Coggins asked whether the housing associations were looking at switching energy provisions within the housing stock away from gas and electricity and towards heat pumps.

The Executive Director for Homes at Irwell Valley stated that each provider had their own carbon neutral plans and spoke about the reductions in funding which was being seen in this area. He spoke about the importance of having consistency in funding so that can build and scale up their approach and issues in a lack of longevity in some of the projects, such as the Green New Deal, which had a lot of funding put into it before it was stopped by the Government.

The Disrepair and Complex Repairs Manager at MSV spoke about ground pumps and how they only work in certain areas and types of building and would require knowledge being given to residents who live in those properties where it would work best, as to its advantages and how it would work.

Councillor Axford asked about what the housing associations were doing to engage with the public with the view of increasing uptake of more eco-friendly solutions and how much the associations saw it as a priority. She finally asked about the Irwell valley eco trial, what the purpose of it was, and what it will be getting used for moving forward.

The Disrepair and Complex Repairs Manager at MSV responded in terms of popularity of schemes from residents, that this was dependent on what scheme was being implemented. Often, these were unpopular due to the disturbance they can cause.

The Executive Director for Homes at Irwell Valley said that the eco trial involved looking at installing a system that will let residents monitor what is happening within the property so that they can be more involved in the process and allow them to become more involved with it.

The Head of Special Projects and Sustainability at L&Q stated that L&Q had received the funding and were building up the programme of work to encourage residents to be involved with retrofitting and increase resident engagement and the impact of the retrofitting to deliver savings for them moving forward.

The Director of Asset Management at YHG added that housing associations did see retrofitting as a priority, however, with them having until 2030 to get stock up to EPC grade C, finances must be managed correctly so that all everything the housing associations want to achieve, can be achieved.

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Councillor Newgrosh asked what the housing associations were currently allowed and not allowed to do when working on a property's EPC rating ahead of the 2030 requirement.

The Head of Special Projects and Sustainability at L&Q responded that there were currently no restrictions on whether someone can live in social housing if it has a low EPC rating, but that they still fall under the 2030 target on improvement.

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and recognised their efforts.

RESOLVED: That the information be noted, and providers and officers be thanked for providing the information.

18. PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN TRAFFORD COUNCIL AND L&Q FOLLOWING MERGER WITH TRAFFORD HOUSING TRUST

The Chair began by noting the importance of L&Q in Trafford due to the volume of stock they held. The Chair noted the previous relationship with Trafford Housing Trust (THT) and stated his hope that the Council would see a similar partnership going forward.

The Partnerships Director NW at L&Q introduced herself and stated that her role was focused upon Trafford and the Northwest and that this role had been made as a conscious decision when the THT merged with L&Q. She stated that she currently did a lot of work with key Greater Manchester (GM) housing association stakeholders, as well as other providers.

The Partnerships Director NW at L&Q informed the Committee about a new joint strategic forum established earlier in the year between the Council's corporate leadership team and similar senior leadership at L&Q. This forum had looked at a wide range of strategic and consistency areas which included increased member communication and engagement. The Chief Executive of L&Q had met with the Chief Executive of the Council and a memorandum of understanding (MoU) had been put in place which also asked how the Scrutiny Committee felt that they could fit into that. This was to be explored moving forward.

As part of this partnership, several changes and engagement had already begun. Firstly, a session for new elected members had been held earlier in the year, and this would continue to be an offer in the future, that provides training for new members so that they knew who they could contact regards to housing issues within their wards. There had also been a commitment to a joint fund of community hubs for the next two years. Plans were also being made to look at working in partnership to deal with the poverty within the borough, which also fed into the work around engaging with the unheard voices.

The Committee were made aware that the Trafford Housing Trust Board had the Leader of the Council on it until the merge. With regard to the L&Q Board, Partnerships Director NW told the Committee that appointments to this Board followed a standardised process, based upon the skills held and required on the

**Scrutiny Committee
20 September 2023**

Board, and encourage Councillors to apply for a position when these became available.

The Chair stated that there should still be Councillor representation on the Board. The Partnerships Director NW responded that due to L&Q covering over 100 Council areas they were unable to offer coverage to all, so instead operate through applications.

Councillor Coggins asked whether any of the membership of the Board was also a local councillor at another Council, asked if Trafford was one of the largest Council's that L&Q operate in, and if so, would Trafford have more of a case to be on the Board. The Partnerships Director NW at L&Q responded that as far as she was aware, there was no one on the L&Q Board who was on it due to them being an elected member. However, she did inform the Committee that Trafford did have one of the largest resident populations living in L&Q stock, within the areas L&Q operate.

Councillor Frass asked about the statement when the partnership was announced that which said that Trafford would retain its own Board and asked why that had not happened. The Partnerships Director NW at L&Q responded that she was not in her position when the statement was made in 2019, however, she would look back at the minutes from the Board meetings to see why this did not happen.

Councillor Axford asked about the community funding mentioned and how that would continue going forward. The Partnerships Director NW at L&Q replied that was being looked at across the whole of the organisation, with the hope of bringing in new teams that will engage directly with the Council.

Councillor Walsh asked whether the strategic forum established between Trafford and L&Q could have an elected member on. The Partnerships Director NW at L&Q said she would take this back to the forum.

The Executive Member for Housing and Advice stated that there had been a great improvement over the last year within the partnership, especially since the Partnerships Director NW assumed her role. He referenced the improvement in communications around housing management and spoke about the difficulties that had arisen over the past year and had been dealt with more efficiently than in the past. For example, with the results of the Ombudsman report with the Executive Member was set to meet with the Chief Executive to discuss this further. The Executive Member for Housing and Advice concluded that time would tell on how the relationship between L&Q and Trafford Council would work, but from his perspective, the relationship was currently operating at a good level.

Councillor Coggins asked whether there would be any leadership from L&Q in the area around decarbonisation due to them being the second biggest housing association in the country. The Head of Special Projects and Sustainability responded that L&Q had a strategy in place, and that they had received one of the highest levels of funding for decarbonisation, with plans to use this to be a leader in the area moving forward.

**Scrutiny Committee
20 September 2023**

Councillor Ennis asked about the future use of Sale Point and their customer facing responsibilities moving forward. The Partnerships Director NW at L&Q responded that she could provide the Committee with a report on the changes at Sale Point. She stated that there was no longer any customer facing staff in place at Sale Point, but they do have the ability to make appointments for residents to come in and make specific queries.

Councillor Ennis asked whether this would be rolled out to other areas in the community. The Partnerships Director NW stated that there had been some work done in community venues such as Limelight.

Councillor Jarman spoke about recent issues that had arisen and that L&Q had been excellent in their response and hoped that would continue going forward.

Chair summarised the points raised and highlighted the importance of the partnership.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the presentation be noted
- 2) That the Partnerships Director NW at L&Q look back at minutes from L&Q Board meetings to see why Trafford did not retain its own Board following the merger with THT.
- 3) That the Partnerships Director NW at L&Q provide the Committee with information on the service changes at Sale Point.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and finished at 9.03 pm

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TRAFFORD
COUNCIL

Weed Control Programme 2024

Review and Proposed Way Forward

Trafford Council's Sustainability Commitment

As part of our commitment to reduce the use of glyphosate agreed by the Executive in June 2020 [Report \(trafford.gov.uk\)](https://trafford.gov.uk)

- Trafford now only hard surface spray the highway / Town Centre's once a year reducing glyphosate by 50% in these areas.
- Weeds are sprayed with a low toxicity herbicide.
- The herbicide is a foliar-applied, translocated herbicide product, for the control of annual and perennial weeds.

We have also introduced an 'Opting-Out' and self-weeding scheme

- If you or your community want to adopt the tree pits on a stretch of frontage in your area, to plant them with flowering plants, you can request that they are not sprayed providing that the community agree to their ongoing maintenance and weeding.
- If all Residents on the street agree, they can also request to opt out of routine weed spraying in their street provided that the residents remove weeds in those streets themselves.

Moving from two highway weed sprays to one

Year	Volume (Litres)
2018	4400
2019	4400
2020	2200
2021	2200
2022	2200

- Annual quantities of Glyphosate used over the past 5 years reduced by 50% on highway.
- Weeds are sprayed with a low toxicity herbicide Glyphosate.
- Area covered approximately 800km of highway
- Although we have chosen to continue to use chemicals as a way of controlling weeds, they are used only in a minimal spot spray and in highly targeted manner

Trafford Council's Sustainability Commitment

We have now stopped weed spraying in all public parks, green spaces and cemeteries...

- We are looking to introduce more wildflower, meadow areas and long grass regimes to encourage bees and other wildlife.
- This means these spaces may now look a little different.
- The council has not completely stopped using chemicals to control weeds in green spaces as part of its strategy to control invasive weeds such as Japanese knotweed that need specialist control.
- We will continue to review our long-term strategic plans on controlling invasive weeds and as a Council we have reduced the amount of chemical weed control to date.
- Stopping the use of glyphosate in parks and green spaces in addition to one spray on highway has reduced our overall total glyphosate usage by 70%.

Alternatives to spraying

Due to Trafford's commitment to environmental sustainability we have and will continue to research and trial alternative options to chemical application in anticipation of glyphosate being no longer available for use.

Weed brush machine.



Hot water weed control equipment for hard surface use.



Weed Control Programme Purpose

Weed control of the highway is primarily undertaken to prevent longer term damage to hard surfaces and infrastructure including footpaths, road surfaces and drainage systems.

- Trafford is responsible for weed control on roads, footways and paved areas on all adopted roads
- We have an annual weed spraying programme where we treat key areas of our **adopted** highway network.
- These areas include channels, the top of kerbs, the back of footways and alleyways (where it borders a wall or fence) and footpaths.
- Treatments usually only work on established plants and won't stop new weeds from growing in the locations we treat.
- We use Glyphosate to treat most weeds.
- Glyphosate is still considered safe if used under manufacturer's instructions and by trained personnel.



Weed Control Programme Timelines

The programme typically takes around two or three months to complete subject to weather conditions

- The programme is planned to start in mid-May/June each year as the treatment is only effective in dry weather.
- Rain and wet conditions may cause delays to the spraying programme and can change the locations that are treated.
- It is estimated that in any typical year the programme will take around 12 weeks to complete, however current and more recent wet weather conditions can mean that the programme can take much longer to complete.
- In previous years with 2 sprays the first spray would commence in April-May and a second spray would follow in August-September
- Treatment of weeds with 2 sprays tackles weeds when they are smaller and less visible
- Treatment with 1 spray can mean that weeds in certain areas will be larger and more widespread before being treated





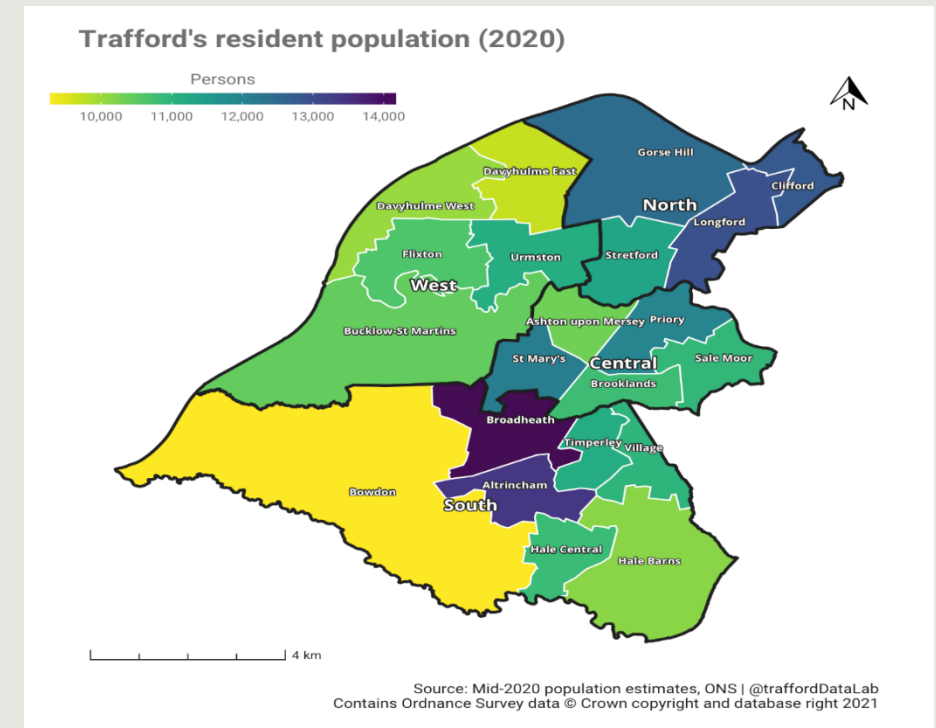
Weed spraying programme undertaken by Amey on behalf of the One Trafford Partnership has always started in the **North of the Borough.**

With 2 sprays weeds were not as visible and regrowth can be tackled on a second spray with less visible reshoot of weeds in any given season

Review of Weeding Programme 2023

Spread across Trafford's 21 wards, Weed spraying started at Stretford and Humphrey Park in the North and finished at Hale Barns and Timperley in the South.

- The Council's client team works closely with operational colleagues within AMEY.
- Operational decision-making is made by jointly considering how best to manage and communicate the programme of works as it moves across the Borough.
- Trafford Data Lab supports decision-making in Trafford by revealing patterns in data through visualisation.
- This informed the decision to start in the North has been based on density of residential areas and length of highway in those areas.



North Trafford



Stretford and Humphrey Park.

Stretford is a densely populated ward.

Old Trafford.

Old Trafford is a small and densely populated ward. Physically it is characterised by dense residential areas of Victorian terraced housing and a diverse range of housing stock

Gorse Hill and Cornbrook.

This is the northern most ward in Trafford. It is the third largest ward in area size and contains most of Trafford Park Industrial Estate.

Lostock and Barton.

The ward is home to the Trafford Centre, separated from the residential areas by the M60,

South Trafford

Altrincham

Altrincham is a sub-regional shopping centre, and Trafford's largest town. It's at the hub of south Manchester's modern transport infrastructure, complemented by an integrated rail, Metrolink and bus Interchange. It also acts as the commercial centre for the area, providing extensive office accommodation.

Bowdon

Bowdon is the largest ward in Trafford and is a combination of several small, rural villages surrounded by open countryside. Bowdon is a semi-rural ward and has a low population density.

Hale

Hale is a densely populated ward located to the south-east of Altrincham town centre. The heart of the ward is Hale village which enjoys a good variety of independent shops and fashionable bars and restaurants.

Hale Barns and Timperley South

Hale Barns and Timperley south ward contains a large amount of agricultural land .





The residents and roads in the **South of Trafford** are now considered at a disadvantage as a result of only one weed spray per season as **these wards are visited last.**

It is often **October** that the Programme **finally reaches the South.**

Contractor Procurement and Challenges

Weed treatment programmes can be subject to delays when contractor procurement is delayed or when contractors are unavailable.....

- As a team, we intend to have contractors procured and agreed between end of January to early March.
- We look to agree for the programme to start in May, with early June being the latest date.
- It has always been a challenge to procure contracts for this work due to the reduced volume of work that is required across the borough.
- Other Council's volume can be more than double in size hence can secure contracts much more easily in a competitive arena.
- Due to national reductions in weed spraying programmes availability of contractors has also reduced.



Looking Ahead

It is the intentions of the One Trafford Partnership to work towards an alternative approach...

- Teams are to start in both the North and South of the Borough **at the same time**.
- Both teams will be **working towards the centre** as the programme progresses.
- One team starting in the North working towards the West.
- One team starting in the South working towards Central.
- We believe this will allow for different deployment strategies to be developed as the work progresses through the Borough, i.e. Town centres could be sprayed as a cluster group.



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Looking Ahead

- Despite significant media publications about Glyphosate, the current stance in legislation and guidance from the UK's relevant regulatory bodies is that the product is deemed to be safe and efficacious for use as a herbicide and is licensed in the UK until December 2025 for both food production and treatment of broad-leaved weeds in the public realm.
- However, academic studies such as Tarazona et al (2017) suggest that the positive implications of reducing Glyphosate could include benefits such as healthier populations of invertebrates, birds and mammals including bees (and other pollinators) which are fundamental to the health of ecosystems.
- It is considered more appropriate to set a performance led programme for weed control rather than a programme which looks to increase the number and volume of chemical applications.
- Increasing the number of weed spray visits would have a detrimental impact on the environment and would require increase in revenue to support such a change.



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Re-wilding initiatives

Re-wilding and use of Parks, Green Spaces and Verges for wildflower meadows, community gardens and increased tree planting is being rolled out

Meadow areas in Parks – in collaboration with Friends Groups some parks have had areas converted by re-wilding with the introduction of differential mowing in and around tree planted areas.

Rewilding and wildflower meadows are also being trialled on grass verges with some examples for 2025 being looked at including:

- Bemrose Ave – some of the central grassy area.
- Richmond Road / the Mount – there's a couple of green areas both sides of the junction onto the Mount from the A56.
- Stamford St / Stamford New Road junction green space.

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Scrutiny Committee
Date: 16th January
Report of: Head of Climate Change and Sustainability

Report Title

This note provides an update on the Council's plans regarding allotments in Trafford.

Summary

Overview

The Allotment Service was inaugurated into the newly formed Climate Change and Sustainability Service in November 2023. This highlights the important front-line role the provision and management of allotments plays in enabling residents access to healthy lifestyles, locally produced food enhancing biodiversity and preserving of vital green spaces.

The Council Allotment estate delivers a clear and tangible contribution towards achieving Trafford Council's three key priorities:

- Reducing health inequalities through promoting a healthy lifestyle including increased physical activity, a nutritional diet, and improved mental wellbeing.
- Supporting people out of poverty through providing affordable opportunities for growing food, improving social skills and community involvement.
- Addressing our climate crisis through preserving green spaces, promoting biodiversity, and driving green-conscious behavioural change.

Trafford Council currently has 36 allotment sites across the Trafford borough. Please refer to Appendix 1. Of these, 12 are leased self-managed sites, 15 sites are run by volunteer committees with shared responsibilities with the council and 8 are fully managed by the Council. The Allotment Service would be untenable without the diligent organisation, local knowledge, diplomacy and countless hours invested by our community groups; we would like to thank them for all that they contribute.

Funding & resources

Trafford's Allotment Service is funded solely through revenue generated from plot rental. The current rental fee is set at £104 for a full-sized plot, £52 for a half plot, and £26 for a quarter plot. Tenants over the age of 60 receive a 50% discount on their first plot. This revenue must cover all water charges, maintenance of boundary fences and gates, grass cutting, hedge trimming, tree works, necessary repairs, scheduled asbestos and legionella checks, and much more.

Allotment rents in Trafford have remained static since 2015, despite significant increases in costs over that time.

The Allotment Service is run by one, full-time dedicated member of staff, also funded from allotment revenues. This is an increase from the previous part time role and recognition of the investment required to run the service.

Challenges ahead**Cost Pressure**

- Maintaining the expected level of service to our allotment sites in the context of increased operational costs due to inflationary pressures is a key concern.
- Water bills, cesspit emptying, grounds maintenance, and structural repairs, and many other services, are essential to running the estate, but costs have increased significantly in recent years.
- We use a prioritisation matrix to make tough decisions on a daily basis about what the Council can and can't afford to provide, whilst sensitively managing various stakeholders' expectations.

Climatic changes

Climatic changes causing increased rainfall and a higher frequency of "weather events" is already impacting allotments, with the situation likely to worsen in coming years.

- With significant recurring flooding on several sites, and insufficient capital for adequate drainage solutions, some plots are rendered unusable for parts of the year.
- Conversely prolonged periods of hot weather make crop irrigation difficult, and whilst rainwater harvesting is encouraged, reserves are quickly depleted in a dry spell.

Waiting lists

Whilst not as lengthy as reported by some authorities, Trafford's allotment waiting list includes approximately 540 residents across the borough who are currently being denied the opportunity to access all the benefits presented by allotment leasing.

Opportunities**Allotment Strategy**

The Council has begun developing an Allotment Strategy that will reflect Trafford Council's Priorities and improve the service's financial sustainability.

- The strategy will seek to optimise Trafford's allotments by establishing a clear framework to manage and improve sites in partnership with existing and future plot holders.
- Our standard Tenancy Agreement and rules will also be updated to align with modern allotment gardening practices and Trafford's Aims.
- The strategy development will include consultation with stakeholders (including Allotment committees, plot tenants and Councillors)

Communications

- In 2024 the allotment service offering will be publicised by Trafford's communications department as part of the Climate Change and Sustainability communications plan.
- Within an urban setting, allotments are an invaluable tool to teach children where food comes from and the nutritional benefits of fruit and vegetables as part of a healthy lifestyle. School visits are already taking place on our allotment sites and are one example of the many positive impacts of allotment services that can be shared through online and print channels.

Website Development

The Allotment service has an established presence on the council website. However, this offer could be significantly improved at relatively little cost to make resources such as relevant forms and processes more easily accessible, and signpost users to practical information for allotment cultivation.

Internal processes

With a full time Allotment officer in place, we will undertake a review of our internal processes to modernise our administrative functions and make the running of the service more accessible and efficient.

Networking and training

- Many committees and individuals with unique and varied skill sets are key to the operation of our service. We are going to facilitate small group meetings between neighbouring sites to create a tenant support network and encourage the exchange of ideas, skills and experiences.
- Training requirements will be identified as part of the strategy consultation process, and we will deliver sessions designed to ensure secretaries and committee members are equipped for these challenging volunteer roles.

Promotion and support of self-management

Self-managed sites in the borough are maintained to an excellent standard and are a fantastic community run asset. We will continue to provide advice and support to allotment groups wishing to explore devolved management, and actively seek to identify sites where we think this style of management would benefit service users.

Funding

We will proactively seek to explore all potential funding streams for our Allotment Service, including grants, community payback schemes, corporate sponsorship, and contributions from other public sector organisations e.g., NHS Green Prescribing. We will advise and support allotment committees to independently apply for funding where possible.

Food Cultivation

Urban food production has the potential to play an important role in meeting demand for fruit and vegetables at a local scale. Producing food in and around cities can improve health outcomes whilst delivering habitats for local wildlife. Cultivating food within Trafford reduces food miles within the borough and could be used to reduce food deserts. We will:

- Encourage plot holders to cultivate without the use of harmful pesticides.
- Consider the scope for promoting community growing groups through the council website, liaising with them so we can help residents without allotments to get involved.

Appendix

1. April 2023

Self managed
Committee
No Committee

Total no of plots	In use	Untenable plots	Vacant	Waiting
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ALTRINCHAM

Grove Lane	31	27	4	0	4
Riddings Hall	80	78	2	0	10
Trafford Drive	57	57	0	0	9
Pickering Lodge	27	27	0	0	6
Woodstock	12	12	0	0	4
	207	201	6	0	33

BOWDON

Vicarage Lane	33	32.5	0.5	0	53
Eaton Road	9	9	0	0	20
	42	41.5	0.5	0	73

HALE

Golf Road	75	70.5	1.5	3	16
Moss Lane	25	14.5	10	0.5	15
Wellfield Lane	48	47.5	0	0.5	6
	148	132.5	11.5	4	112

SALE

Totnes Road	8	8	0	0	5
De-Quincey Road	12	12	0	0	6
Warslow Drive	29	29	0	0	2
Grosvenor Road	86	86	0	0	15
Moor Nook	70	69	0.5	0.5	29
Tavistock Road	4	4	0	0	2
Walton Road	34	33	1	0	33
Winstanley Road	93	93	0	0	20
	336	334	1.5	0.5	112

STRETFORD					
Church Street	9	9	0	0	19
Gorse Hill	112	111	0	1	15
Old Trafford	99	96	0	3	76
Urmston Lane	35	35	0	0	30
	255	251	0	4	140
URMSTON					
Balmoral	31	29	2	0	3
Leagate	12	11	0	1	1
Brookfield	42	42	0	1	4
Chadwick	42	41.5	0	0.5	6
Granville Park	42	42	0	0	11
The Grove	28	28	0	0	4
Laneheads (Private)	33	32	0	1	0
Mansfield	17	16.5	0	0.5	0
Marlborough	80	70	10	0	4
Mossfields	62	62	0	0	12
Humphrey Park	70	69.5	0	0.5	5
Wyndcliffe	4	4	0	0	4
	463	448	12	3	54
PARTINGTON					
St Marys	10	10	0	0	5
Moss View	39	39	0	0	15
	49	49	0	0	20
TOTAL FOR BOROUGH	1500	1457	31	12	539

Recommendation(s)

That the report be noted.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

Name: Bob Rothwell
 Extension: robert.rothwell@trafford.gov.uk

Background Papers: NA

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TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Scrutiny Committee
Date: 16th January 2024
Report for: Decision
Report of: Scrutiny Committee Chair
Report Title

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW OF THE EXECUTIVE'S DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2024-2025

Summary

The Executive's Draft Budget Proposals for 2024-2025 were agreed at its meeting held on 15th November 2023.

Two Budget Scrutiny Working Group sessions were held on the 28th and 30th November 2023 with the relevant Executive Members and Senior Officers in attendance to address Members questions. Members were also provided with background information on the budget proposals.

This report reflects the outcome of those discussions, summarises areas, and provides recommendations for the Executive to consider in developing its final budget proposals and response to the Scrutiny Committee.

Recommendation(s)

The Scrutiny Committee are asked to approve the following recommendations for submission to the Executive:

- 1. That the Executive keep all Councillors informed of the Council's full lobbying plans and for Scrutiny to have input to those plans.**
- 2. That the Executive Member for Finance and Governance continue to lobby the Government over support to Local Authorities and where possible work with other local authorities in doing so.**
- 3. That the Executive provide the Scrutiny Committee with further information on how the savings listed within the savings plan would be achieved and provide the plans that support their success.**

4. That Scrutiny support the Executive producing a communications strategy which can inform residents of the financial restraints of the Council and reasons behind any service changes provided by the Council.
5. That the Executive explores the closure of Trafford Town Hall once a week and provides Scrutiny with any negative impacts that are found from this change if they occur.
6. That the Executive continue to monitor reserves closely and inform the Scrutiny Committee if further concerns are raised around the Council's levels of reserves.
7. That the Executive be requested to continue to monitor increased income and opportunities for income generated through contract changes with Amey and keep Scrutiny updated on results of this.
8. That the Executive look to increase transparency on the service management process in both Children and Adults services and highlight these changes to a future meeting of Scrutiny for comment.

Background Papers: None

Contact person for further information:

Name: Harry Callaghan

BUDGET SCRUTINY REPORT – 2023/24

Foreword by the Chair of Scrutiny Committee

I welcome the opportunity for Scrutiny to review and comment on the draft proposals at an early stage. On behalf of Scrutiny Members, I would like to thank the Executive Members and Corporate Leadership Team for their commitment, help and contribution to our scrutiny of the draft budget proposals. I would also like to thank Scrutiny Members who played an important part in the process and whose contribution was invaluable.

Trafford Council, like many Councils across the Country, are finding it difficult to balance the budget as a result of 14 years of Austerity, which has meant the Council has had a reduction of around £300M taken out its budget since Austerity Measures were put in place. These measures, put alongside the Pandemic and Cost of Living Crises, are putting a huge strain on the Council budget. Scrutiny Members raised a great deal of concern for our communities, and particularly our most vulnerable residents. All of these issues mean that the Council have had to cut back on the level of Services it can provide to our residents, however Members, the Council Executive and Officers are committed to support our communities as much as possible through these difficult times. Scrutiny Members are very supportive of the Executive to continue to Lobby Government over support for Local Authorities to receive improved funding, Members also support the Executive producing a communications strategy which can inform residents of the financial restraints of the Council and the reasons behind any service changes provided by the Council.

I would like to put on record my thanks to the Executive and Corporate Leadership Team for the work they have carried out during the very difficult period in managing the budget. I would also like to thank All the staff, Partners, the many Volunteers, and Council Members for the support and dedication they have displayed to Trafford residents and businesses throughout these extremely unprecedented times.

We hope that our Budget Scrutiny will contribute to the decision-making process in ensuring that robust measures are in place to manage the challenges Trafford faces. We have identified areas where we feel that there are risks and we look forward to receiving details of how the Executive will address these. We will be following up on a number of areas in our work programme for the next municipal year.

Councillor David Acton

Chair, Scrutiny Committee.

January 2024

Background

1.1 As the Normal budget presentation was not able to be undertaken at the Scrutiny Committee in November 2023 (due to the by-election), the Chair of Scrutiny with Officers agreed that that Budget Scrutiny would focus upon the Place Directorate, the Council's reserves, the investment strategy, lobbying for fairer funding, Children's Services, Adults Services, and all savings proposals. The first session covered the Place directorate, the reserves, investment strategy, and lobbying for fairer funding with the second session focused upon Children's and Adult's Services.

1.2 A presentation was produced, covering information for both sessions, and circulated to Councillors on the 24th November 2023, which gave Scrutiny Members time to review the documents prior to the sessions and request additional information.

2. Key Messages

2.1 Over the course of the Budget Scrutiny process several key themes, detailed below, emerged as being of particular interest to Scrutiny Members.

2.2 Lobbying

2.2.1 During the first session, some members raised concern regarding the lack of action by National Government to provide sufficient support to local authorities. Scrutiny welcomed the Lobbying Strategy from the Executive Member for Finance and Governance and would like all Councillors to be informed of the full lobbying plans moving forward, and to have Scrutiny provide input to those plans.

Recommendations:

1. **That the Executive keep all Councillors informed of the Council's full lobbying plans and for Scrutiny to have input to those plans.**
2. **That the Executive Member for Finance and Governance continue to lobby the Government over support to Local Authorities and where possible work with other local authorities in doing so.**

2.3 Savings Plan

2.3.1 Members of the Scrutiny Committee enquired as to whether plans had been built in behind the savings plan, laid out during the first session. The Director of Finance informed members that there were plans that sat behind the aims of the wider savings plan. Scrutiny requested that these be shared with the Committee to provide further understanding of how the aims set out in the savings plan, will be achieved and supported.

Recommendation:

That the Executive provide the Scrutiny Committee with further information on how the savings listed within the savings plan would be achieved and provide the plans that support their success.

2.4 Communication Strategy

2.4.1 Over the course of both sessions there were several concerns raised about residents not being provided the clear detail of the financial strains of which the Council was under. Scrutiny felt that it would be important that with any potential future changes to the services provided by the Council, that residents be informed as to why these changes are being made, to ensure they have the sufficient context.

2.4.2 The Executive Member for Finance, Change and Governance emphasised with members and felt that the story needed to be told. She informed Scrutiny that she had begun work on establishing a Communications Strategy, alongside the Council's communications team.

Recommendation –

That Scrutiny support the Executive producing a communications strategy which can inform residents of the financial restraints of the Council and reasons behind any service changes provided by the Council.

2.5 Closure of Trafford Town Hall

2.5.1 Scrutiny welcomed exploring the idea of closing Trafford Town Hall once a week. Some members felt that the closure would be of little impact to residents and that the savings would be positive. Scrutiny requested that they were updated on any impacts of a closure and that the Executive continually monitors the impacts to ensure that it remains a viable saving.

Recommendation –

That the Executive explores the closure of Trafford Town Hall once a week and provides Scrutiny with any negative impacts that are found from this change if they occur.

2.6 Reserves

2.6.1 Scrutiny raised concern around the levels of reserves presented during the first session. The Director of Finance assured Members that the aim was to be as open and transparent about reserves as possible and explained the detail behind different elements of the reserves available to the Council.

2.6.2 Scrutiny questioned whether the Council would be in a position to offset additional losses in association with the shortfall identified with business rates relating to the Trafford Centre. The Director of Finance informed Members how the Council were careful around managing the amounts they forecast to not overestimate what

can be expected. Concern was also raised about un-earmarked reserves which was down to around £10M, which was low for a Council with a budget the size of Trafford. Scrutiny requested that they are kept updated around any further concerns to the Council's reserves.

Recommendation –

That the Executive continue to monitor reserves closely and inform the Scrutiny Committee if further concerns are raised around the Council's levels of reserves.

2.7 Amey Income

2.7.1 Scrutiny welcomed the increased income generated through contract changes following the recent Amey 7-year review and enquired as to whether the Council hoped this would be something that increases in the future as Amey takes on more work.

2.7.2 The Corporate Director for Place welcomed this and informed Scrutiny of his hope that this income would rise in the forthcoming years. The Executive Member for Highways alerted the Committee to plans for future offers for private companies, where the Council can provide seamless opportunities, which will leave the Council well placed to receive further funding. Scrutiny requests that they are kept aware of future increases in income generated by working alongside Amey.

Recommendation –

That the Executive be requested to continue to monitor increased income and opportunities for income generated through contract changes with Amey and keep Scrutiny updated on results of this.

2.8 Service Management Process for Children and Adults Services

2.8.1 Scrutiny raised concern during the second session around the service management process for children and adults' services and felt that this needed increased transparency.

Recommendation –

That the Executive look to increase transparency on the service management process in both Children and Adults services and highlight these changes to a future meeting of Scrutiny for comment.

Trafford Scrutiny Committee 2023/24 Work Programme

Wednesday 12th July 2023 – 6:30pm, Committee Rooms 2&3, Trafford Town Hall				
<i>Report submission deadline – midday Tuesday 5th July 2023</i>				
Item	Information	Executive Member(s)	Lead Officer(s)	Comments
Amey Seven Year Review	To receive an overview of the Amey seven-year review and outcomes.	Cllr Adshead	Corporate Director of Place	
Corporate Plan Delivery	To receive a report from the Leader of the Council's priorities within the Corporate Plan.	Cllr Ross	Corporate Director of Strategy and Resources	
Committee Work Programme 2023/24	To Agree the Committee work programme for the year.	N/A		

Wednesday 20 September 2023 – 6:30pm, Committee Rooms 2&3, Trafford Town Hall

Report submission deadline – midday on Tuesday 12 September 2023

Item	Information	Executive Member(s)	Lead Officer(s)	Comments
Damp and Mould within social Housing Stock	The six largest Social Housing Associations invited to update the Committee on actions Taken since the publication of the coroner’s report into the death of Awaab Ishak in Rochdale in November 2022.	Executive Member for Housing and Advice	Adrian Fisher	
Retrofitting within Social Housing Stock	The six largest Social Housing Associations invited to update the Committee on the actions they have taken to retrofit housing stock in line with the Council’s	Executive Member for Housing and Advice	Adrian Fisher	
Trafford relationship with L&Q	Representatives from L&Q are invited to update the Committee on developments following the merger with Trafford Housing Trust.	Executive Member for Housing and Advice	Adrian Fisher	

Wednesday 8 November 2023 – 6:30pm, Committee Rooms 2&3, Trafford Town Hall				
<i>Report submission deadline – midday on Tuesday 31 October 2023 – This meeting was cancelled</i>				
Item	Information	Executive Member(s)	Lead Officer(s)	Comments
Budget Presentation	To receive an outline of the budget position for 2024/25 to inform the Budget Scrutiny process	Executive Member for Finance, Change, and Governance	Director of Finance and Systems	
Access to Trafford Services	A follow up from the item that came to the Committee in March 2023. The Committee are asking for more in-depth information as to the contacts for individual departments following on from the than just the Contact Centre.	The Leader	Corporate Director for Strategy and Resources	
Work Programme	To Consider the remaining items on the Committee item priority list and for members to put forward any other items to be considered over the course of the year.			

Budget Scrutiny

There are two Budget Scrutiny sessions scheduled for the 28 November and 30 November 2023. Discussions at these sessions, will help formulate the Scrutiny Committee's Budget Scrutiny report to the Executive (To be presented to Scrutiny at the 16 January 2023 meeting).

Wednesday 16 January 2024 – 6:30pm, Committee Rooms 2&3, Trafford Town Hall				
<i>Report submission deadline – midday on Monday 8 January 2024</i>				
Item	Information	Executive Member(s)	Lead Officer(s)	Comments
2023/24 Budget Scrutiny Report	A report produced by the Scrutiny Committee providing its recommendations on the 2024/25 Budget Proposals.	N/A – Report of the Scrutiny Committee		
Weeding Programme	Members raised this item following issues with last years weeding programme and would like to know the steps that are being taken to improve the programme.	Highways, Environmental and Traded Services	Corporate Director of Place	
Re-wilding and Green Spaces	To review the Council's re-wilding plans and any plans for the utilisation of the areas green spaces for programmes such as community gardens and food cultivation.	Highways, Environmental and Traded Services	Corporate Director of Place	

Allotments	To review the Council's plans regarding allotments, community growing, and food cultivation.	Leisure, Arts, Culture and Heritage	Corporate Director of Place	
Events at Old Trafford Task and Finish Group Interim Report	To consider the draft interim report for approval for submission to the Executive.	N/A		
Wednesday 13 March 2024 – 6:30pm, Committee Rooms 2&3, Trafford Town Hall				
<i>Report submission deadline – midday on Tuesday 5 March 2024</i>				
Item	Information	Executive Member(s)	Lead Officer(s)	Comments
Access to Council Services	To receive an update from the Executive Following submission of the interim report from the Committee to the Executive meeting 11 th December 2023.	The Leader	Corporate Director of Strategy and Resources.	
Corporate Plan Update		The Leader	Corporate Director of Strategy and Resources.	

Ongoing Task and Finish work				
Item	Information	Executive Member(s)	Lead Officer(s)	Comments
Events at Old Trafford	Work carried over from 2022/23 Municipal Year.	Cllr Adshead – Executive Member for Highways, Environmental, and Paid Services	Corporate Director of Place	
Reducing Car Dependency	Work carried over from 2022/23 Municipal Year.	Councillor Williams – Executive Member for Climate Change and Cllr Adshead – Executive Member for Highways, Environmental, and Paid Services	Corporate Director of Place	

Travellers	Trial and Consultation of Temporary Stopping Area underway – outcome to come to Scrutiny	Cllr Adshead – Executive Member for Highways, Environmental, and Paid Services	Corporate Director of Place	
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