

Questions Submitted for Council – 22 November 2023

Question 1 - Submitted by Councillor Zhi

“In June 2023, the Council refreshed its Carbon Neutral Action Plan under the same framework as the ‘Our Trafford, Our Future’ plan. Key Performance Indicators can be measured against comparable local authorities via the Trafford Council Corporate Plan Dashboard. CO₂ emissions in Trafford as of 2021 are at 1442.1 kilotonnes, well above the average for similar local authorities in 2021 of 1163.4 kilotonnes.

Trafford Council is also underperforming on a number of KPIs. As of 31st October 2023, the percentage of licenced ultra-low emission vehicles in Trafford was 2.31% compared to the average for similar local authorities of 6.63%. As of June 2023, Trafford has 43.7 electric vehicle charging devices per 100,000 population compared to the average for similar local authorities of 60.1 devices per 100,000 population. In Trafford properties given a domestic EPC rating of A, B or C over the last ten years, from September 2013 to June 2023, is a shockingly low 35.7% compared to the average for similar local authorities of 45.9%.

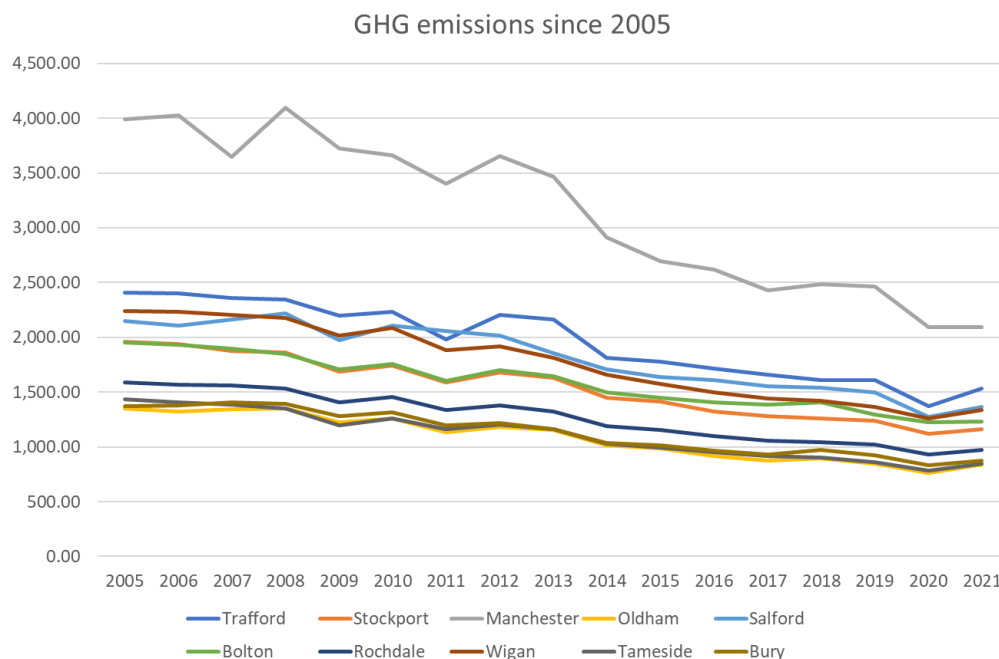
Given these key areas of underperformance, in particular high carbon emission output, could this Council please explain what pragmatic plans it has put in place in order to ensure Trafford Council meets its incredibly ambitious target of carbon neutrality by 2038?”

Response

The data quoted in the question is taken from the Trafford data lab, which is an excellent example of Trafford being open and transparent on emissions and the drivers of them. As always with using data of this nature, context is important. For example:

- The local context is critical. Local authorities experience changes in emissions for a variety of reasons, many of which are outside of their control. In particular, emissions reductions at a local level are strongly driven by national-level policy which is, in principle, working towards a net zero target of 2050. This is less ambitious than Trafford and Greater Manchester’s 2038 target and means the availability of national levers for change are not always supportive of local targets. Action at the local level needs an aligned and supportive national policy framework.
- Emissions levels strongly reflect the nature of the local authority area and the starting point from which progress is being made. For example, the housing stock in Trafford has lower levels of EPC Band A, B and C houses than in similar authorities which means Trafford has started from a lower position. But, while the percentage of EPC Band A, B and C houses is lower than in other similar authorities, the increase in the number has been faster than those other authorities. Further to this, Trafford has the second highest GHG emissions in Greater Manchester, with much of this coming from Trafford Park, resulting in a GHG emissions profile that is quite different to the majority of other authorities in the UK.
- The data on the data lab shows that Trafford has made identical progress in reducing CO₂ emissions since 2010 as the similar local authorities (a 31% reduction). As described above, Trafford’s starting position was higher than most other regional authorities, but the progress in Trafford has mirrored that made across the Greater Manchester region, as shown in the graph below. For example, Trafford has made exactly the same % reduction in GHG emissions between 2005 and 2021 as Bury (one of the ‘similar authorities’).

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But whilst progress has been made, it is recognised that, as is the case in all local authorities across the UK, progress needs to speed up to achieve net zero. Action is therefore being taken on a number of fronts to do this – some examples are listed below – and the Council will continue to work with partners across Trafford and Greater Manchester to consider the scope for further action.

- Getting its own house in order – the Council has shown leadership by reducing the Council’s own GHG emissions by almost 17% in just 4 years (2018/19 to 2021/22), through taking action to decarbonise its estate and fleet. For example, the Council:
 - Has shown leadership by moving early to decarbonise key Council buildings, for example the Town Hall is heated by a ground source heat pump and has recently fitted energy efficient LED lighting.
 - Is decarbonising our leisure estate – decarbonisation work is currently being carried out on Altrincham Leisure Centre. The Council has applied for Government funding for work on Partington and Stretford Leisure centres.
 - Has introduced 16 new electric vehicles to its fleet, cutting carbon and air quality emissions.
 - Has supported decarbonisation work, including solar PV and heat pumps, across a number of buildings in the education estate.
- The Council has carried out feasibility work on the option of developing a low carbon heat network in the Civic Quarter in Trafford and is looking to develop an outline business case.
- We are targeting the key emissions sector in Trafford – industry – by taking forward a partnership with the Growth Company to encourage and support low carbon action in businesses across Trafford Park.
- The Council is working with our Greater Manchester partners on strategy development. For example, it is feeding in to the Greater Manchester five year Environment Plan update, and working with GMCA on a regional climate adaptation plan.
- We continue to engage key influential organisations and high energy users in Trafford through the Climate Emergency Commission.
- The Council has published a Cycling, Walking & Wheeling strategy, encouraging active travel.

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- We are enabling the VCFSE sector to accelerate action on Climate Change.
- The ECO4: Energy Company Obligation phase 4, funding home energy improvements, launched June 2023.
- Across Greater Manchester, the Your Home Better programme encourages 'Willing to Pay' households to make home energy improvements – it was launched May 2022.
- Be.EV Electric Vehicle charging infrastructure: Agreement for 87 chargers supplying 174 bays, which includes Trafford Council's first hub facility at Sale Waterside featuring 8 units and facilities for 16 spaces in one area. Currently have coverage in 14 out of the 21 wards in Trafford and due to the constraints of land and power availability looking at on street charging and potentially other measures to increase coverage.
- Local Area Energy Plan: Completed in June 2022, setting out a high-level blueprint for transforming the borough towards net zero. This now forms part of a GM wide Strategic Outline Business Case for investing in our domestic and public buildings.
- Local Plan Revision: Adoption of Places for everyone policies will enhance Trafford's existing Local Plan. A revised Local Plan due in 2026 is expected to include low carbon policies to support retrofit of existing properties and promote sustainable new developments.

It is widely recognised that local authorities cannot deliver carbon neutrality by themselves. We already have strong partnership working in Trafford and will continue this to help drive the action that we all want to see across the Borough, to make Trafford greener, more efficient and a great place to live and to attract new, green jobs to the area.

Question 2 - Submitted by Councillor Zhi

"Residents in Oldfield Brow are concerned that play equipment which was removed in 2021 has not been returned to the site and are keen to see it returned. Oldfield Brow Partnership have even gone as far as to find external funding for new play equipment to be installed on the site. Could the Council provide an update of when the public is likely to see the play equipment returned?"

Response

We are aware the play equipment (Play build items) at Oldfield Brow recreation ground (Cow Field) are not in use. The pieces of equipment were removed from use due to wear and tear, the timber structures on inspection were deemed no longer structurally sound. There are always demands placed on our capital programme each year and in particular play build items (play equipment made from timber) are giving the team and the council its biggest challenge.

Unfortunately both items not in use at Cowfield are play-build items and to replace these items with a more sustainable and lasting material at the same scale as those removed would result in an estimated cost in excess of £180k - £200k. This cost will place substantial pressure onto our capital programme for both this year 23/24 and any future years capital programme.

Having said that officers are willing to discuss options with the community and the partnership and will be attending Oldfield brow partnership meeting on Thursday 23rd November to explore an options and look at how best we can meet these challenges and work alongside the community to provide a way forward.

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Question 3 - Submitted by Councillor Zhi

“Residents are increasingly concerned about the safety of pedestrians and particularly small children in Oldfield Brow Primary School. I have received multiple reports from a number of parents about the dangers for small children of crossing the road in front of Oldfield Brow Primary School. As such I put forward a petition on the 8th of November, with the support of residents, for a safer school run for pupils at Oldfield Brow Primary school. This petition is still under review. Could the Council please provide an explanation for why this petition is not live?”

Response

The Petition will be able to go live on the Council’s website immediately upon receipt of confirmation from the Petitioner in relation to the duration of the Petition. The Petitioner has been contacted in this regard. Petitions are usually presented as live on the Council’s website promptly. The Council acknowledges that there has been a slight delay in this case, which has been caused by a technical issue with the software that the Council uses. A resolution from the Council’s provider was required before Democratic Services could proceed.

Question 4 - Submitted by Councillor Evans

“Could the council please provide information on the costs of the consultation processes for the following schemes and the number of responses for each scheme:

- a) Sale Moor Place Plan
- b) 2021 Active Neighbourhood Scheme for Walton Road
- c) Waiting restrictions proposed for Framingham Road, Georges Road, and Walton Road area.
- d) Hale Place Plan Consultations"

Response

- a) Sale Moor Place Plan

Direct costs for the consultations (leaflets, room hire) were £577

Responses: 275 Residents + 11 Business owners (286 total)

(These do not include the responses to the consultations on the original Plans in 2020)

- b) 2021 Active Neighbourhood Scheme for Walton Road

There was direct no Council spending on the Walton Road Active Neighbourhood as all prior work were funded by Transport for Greater Manchester.

Responses: 906.

- c) Waiting restrictions proposed for Framingham Road, Georges Road, and Walton Road area.

The exact cost of consultation individual sites will be difficult to extract and provide as work is often undertaken in batches however, based on average costs associated with typical TRO’s the costs will of the order of £7k.

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The number of responses associated with Framingham Road is as follows: 10 objections, and 2 representations in support of the restrictions.

d) Hale Place Plan Consultations

Direct costs for the consultations (leaflets, room hire) were £627
Responses: 178 Residents + 12 Business owners (190 total)
(These do not include the responses to the consultations on the original Plans in 2020)

Question 5 - Submitted by Councillor Evans

“ ‘A Star is Born’ heralds Trafford Labour Council in a recent press release announcing the addition of two new councils to The Council’s successful procurement service STAR. Given we all agree on Stars obvious benefits and success, set up under the Conservative administration, focussing on social value and the Trafford Pound. How is this council going to capitalise on this success, moving forward, by rolling it out to more partners?”

Response

We are incredibly proud of the growth of STAR and all of our efforts must now be focussed on embedding the two new Councils into the STAR family. I am pleased to advise that the staff who transferred under TUPE to Trafford are settling in well.

In terms of future growth, this is always something we are open to exploring and will continue to consider opportunities for further expansion of STAR.

For now, our priority is to settle in St Helen’s and Knowsley Council and to explore how collaborative procurement can benefit all of the members of STAR Procurement.

Supplementary Question

What has happened to any surplus profits? And what are the KPIs for expansion?

Response to Supplementary Question

Surplus profits are due to be discussed at the next STAR Board Meeting. Anything that was surplus up to the two new authorities joining STAR is ringfenced to the 4 founder authorities. The Director of Procurement is currently considering team development which we will propose is paid for from surplus. Surplus balances will be discussed with a number of options presented for utilisation, including ring fencing for future pay inflation in 2024/25.

I am not aware of any KPI’s for expansion. However we do have income targets on SLA work.

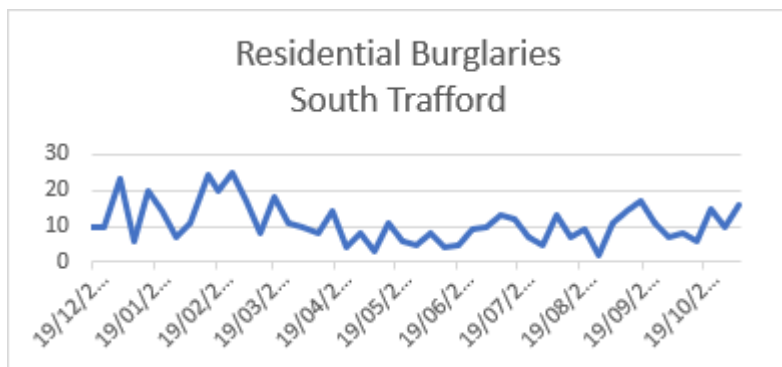
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Question 6 - Submitted by Councillor Brophy

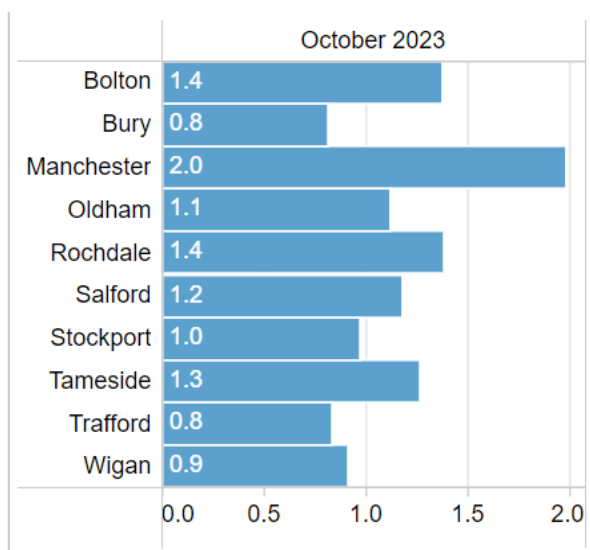
“How is the Administration engaging with Greater Manchester Police to combat the alarming rise in domestic burglary incidents in South Trafford?”

Response

There was an increase in residential burglaries (the statistics include sheds as well as homes) in the south of the borough recently



For context, in Trafford we rank as lowest for neighbourhood crime in GM along with Bury.



We have worked with GMP to close two properties where the occupants were linked to burglary, and have taken action to secure a legal order to ban one individual from the whole of the borough.

We attend a monthly meeting with GMP to review incidents and our responses and to ensure that we are joined up in our activity. For example, we have done work with GMP and residents in the south around crimes aimed at the theft of high powered vehicles, and encouraging the use of, and providing, faraday pouches.

We also have our Safer Homes Scheme in which we trained our staff to Level 4 in Crime Prevention, and they can carry out surveys on properties to increase security and reduce the risk of burglary. The police can refer people into this scheme.

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Burglary is a top priority for the South Policing Team as residents have identified it as one of their main concerns. We have also run a number of events with the police in the south promoting safety and security, providing security items to residents, and giving advice.

CCTV Control Room also work closely with GMP and we always review footage for any evidence. As we move into Phase 3 of our CCTV infrastructure, we are also going to be reviewing the location of all our cameras with GMP.

Supplementary Question

Andy Burnham promised a named officer for every ward in Greater Manchester. South Trafford Neighbourhood Policing Team is at 66% capacity. When is South Trafford going to get the additional four officers we need.

Response to Supplementary Question

The neighbourhood team has seen a number of changes in resources during the past few months as we invest further to improve it. There have been periodic gaps on a few of the teams but these have been covered by the wider neighbourhood team for each area in the interim, so no areas have been left without coverage. Each team has a nominated PCSO and Police Officer for point of contact, but should these not be on duty or absent for any reason, the wards affected are automatically covered by the rest of the team. This ensures no gaps, this flexibility also allows us to move resources to manage risk on a daily basis to ensure we provide the best service possible.

I am pleased to report that 6 additional officers have been recruited into the Neighbourhood teams over the past few months and are all settling into post. They have come from a variety of teams which brings a diverse range of experience and knowledge and increases our existing skill set.

In addition to this we have increased our offer for a Neighbourhood Crime Team by two officers, so that real focus can be placed on the investigative side and bring offenders to justice.

The Neighbourhood Team also now has the Tasking Team attached to it, which is an additional 1 Sgt + 5 PCs. This team provides a really proactive response and covers both the North and South areas of Trafford. The team is deployed in response to threat and risk which is continually reviewed.

Both NCT and NTT work daily to support the wider neighbourhood teams providing additional resilience and bespoke skills.

We have also strengthened the Prevention Hub with an additional Sgt to assist with problem solving repeat demand. With the Team of 1 Inspector, 1 Sgt and 6 Pcs being introduced to the Trafford Centre over the next few months (due to staged moves).

There are currently two vacancies on the South Neighbourhood Team, which equates to 16% under establishment.

It is anticipated that we will do another round of recruitment for Neighbourhood after the New Year, dependent on natural movement. Further movement of staff around the festive period can be counter-productive by causing increased disruption to the District and it can also affect the wellbeing of staff.

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Question 7 - Submitted by Councillor Brophy

“What steps are Trafford Council taking to address the serious shortage of secondary school places in the south of the borough particularly in the Altrincham and Sale area?”

Response

A detailed update on the school places risk was provided to the Accounts and Audit Committee on 29 September 2023. These are the key strategies:

- Permanent expansion project to create a significant number of places at Altrincham College is underway, but the delivery timescale has slipped to September 2025 due to project complexities and we are working to respond to a Sport England objection.
- Feasibility study commissioned to scope a permanent expansion of a significant number of places at Broadoak School to meet future demand from new housing in the Partington/Carrington area, with an option to create temporary additional capacity of 30 places in Year 7 from September 2024. An additional school transport route linking Altrincham and Sale West to Partington was introduced in September 2023 to improve access to Broadoak.
- Feasibility study commissioned at North Cestrian School in 2022 to expand by 150 places but over-developed site meant project options were complex and cost prohibitive. There is now potentially in 2023 adjacent land for sale following closure of Loreto Preparatory School. Land valuation being sought for the site adjacent to North Cestrian School and high level scoping for potential capital scheme to expand being explored but likely to exceed the basic need funding allocation.
- Secured School Rebuild Programme funding for Sale High School, with the project scheduled for phase 2 which starts in 2025, meaning project delivery for September 2027 at the very earliest. Any potential expansion would have to be aligned with the rebuild and this will be considered for any future funding allocation when the rebuild project is scoped.
- Opening a new school has been fully explored but not feasible. Trafford is not eligible for the central free school programme as it focuses on areas with the lowest educational attainment and we do not have the required evidenced shortfall of places for a new school, nor the funding to pay for one as the council would be required to provide the site and meet all capital build costs which would be upwards of £25m which significantly exceeds our funding allocation.
- Explored feasibility of expanding Ashton-on-Mersey School but unable to expand within existing site.
- Feasibility study commissioned for Wellington School, to be completed spring 2024.
- Specific advice to Sale and Altrincham residents transferring to secondary to apply for all their local non-selective schools. This was largely successful for the 2022 and 2023 admission rounds and maximised available places for Trafford residents.
- Asked all Trafford schools to offer additional places over PAN for September 2024 admission.
- 10 additional places created through capital scheme at Stretford High School.

Question 8 - Submitted by Councillor Eckersley

“As Bowdon councillors we have received complaints and communications expressing concern over the roadworks at the Dunham Rd / St Margaret’s Road junction and Gorse Lane.”

Point 1

These concerns include:

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- Dangerous pedestrian crossing points
- Lack of safe crossing points
- Poor visibility, lack of signage and markings, during the current works.

What does the council intend to do to mitigate current risks at the junction in the immediate term?

Point 2

And even more concerning is the Closure of Gorsey Lane to traffic from the A56

- Failure to consult adequately with Bowdon Ward Councillors over the potentially revised road layout.
- Rushed, late notice, inadequate site meeting that puts St Margaret's Church at risk of closure and new information that came to light about the traffic flow that was not mentioned in the original consultation."

Response

Point 1 – current situation with roadworks

It is acknowledged that the current temporary traffic management may make it more difficult than usual for people to cross in their usual places. The physical roadworks are scheduled to be completed by the end of December although final commissioning of the Traffic signal equipment by TfGM will take place during early January.

In the interim there is currently a temporary set of signals to provide a controlled safe crossing for pedestrians across the A56 Dunham Road and they will remain in place until the permanent signals are fully operational.

Point 2 – Closure of Gorsey Lane to traffic from the A56

The Gorsey Lane scheme is a Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) led and funded Bee Network Crossings scheme and has been in the pipeline for the past 3 years. Following extensive consultation, in two phases in August/September 2021 and November 2021, including input from the residents and from the Church, Exec approval for the scheme was granted in September 2022, and construction, based on the approved scheme design, has been underway for the past two months, with a late December/January deadline for completion .

The Executive Report dated 19 September 2022, titles 'Consultation Results for MCF Crossings Proposals at A56 Dunham Road and Gorsey Lane, Altrincham' provided details of consultation exercises undertaken and subsequent proposals for the introduction of a new Crossing on A56 Dunham Road between its junctions with Gorsey Lane and St Margaret's Road, Altrincham (Altrincham and Bowdon wards). The Executive approved the progression of proposals for the junctions detailed in the report be progressed to detailed design, and subject to no significant design amendments, proceed to delivery.

Concerns of the changes to the access of Gorsey Lane were only recently raised (I understand it was the last week of Oct 2023) with the project team by the new Vicar and Church representatives. A project team from TfGM met with the Vicar on site to understand their concerns. This meeting triggered a significant period of liaison between various officers at both TfGM and Trafford Council to discuss the concerns raised.

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As you will appreciate the design proposals were approved by the Executive in September 2022 and as such, any changes which would amount to a significant changes to the design which has already been approved (to allow two-way traffic to Gorse Lane from Dunham Road) would need to be reconsidered, following the same process as the original design, including consultation, before being considered by the Executive again.

The Council wrote to Altrincham and Bowdon ward members on the 7th November, asking for views on a potential change to the scheme, and this was followed by a site meeting on the morning of the 10th November. It was clear from these discussions that there was not a consensus in support of the scheme being amended. Given that the work had started on site based on the approved design; that a change to the design would require a consultation exercise and further decision from the Executive; and that there was no consensus for the construction to be paused for changes to the design to be considered, following discussions with officers, TFGM and the relevant Executive Member, the conclusion reached was to continue with construction in accordance with the Executive's decision on 19 September 2022.

It is important to highlight that, although construction is being progressed as approved, the changes that will be introduced as a result of the scheme are being introduced subject to a further period of consideration. Please note:

- That the one-way access on Gorse Lane will be introduced via an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO). This means that there will be a 'trial' of the scheme design.
- The trial period will last 18 months from the date of the ETRO. The trial period is intended to gather evidence and information which will inform the decision as to whether the ETRO, and the changes introduced by the order, should be removed or made permanent.
- During the first 6 months there will be an opportunity for feedback to be submitted to the Council, which will include feedback from anyone who is adversely affected by the order. During the feedback period, people will be able to object to the permanent implementation of the one-way access.
- A decision on whether the changes introduced as part of the ETRO will be removed or made permanent will be taken within 18 months of the order coming into effect and will take into account any evidence and information collated and any feedback received during that period.

In respect of the specific concerns raised, I can confirm that a swept path analysis of the entrance to the church on Gorse Lane has been undertaken and it is confirmed that hearses and wedding cars will still be able to undertake the turning, whilst the centre islands are in place to accommodate the contra flow. I can also confirm that the construction team will confirm the swept path on site before the island is constructed and are able to make changes to the size to ensure vehicles can turn as appropriate, as this would be a minor design amendment.

The contractor is aware of the funeral which is taking place on the 22nd November and will maintain access to and from the A56 for vehicles for this service.

Supplementary Question

If at the end of the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order changes are not made permanent, will it not be difficult to reverse the fairly permanent construction on this road? Why haven't the Council considered temporary measures which could be easily removed, rather than

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going through the expense of installing permanent fixtures which could later require a high spend to remove?

Question 9 - Submitted by Councillor Coggins

“Can the council make public the latest update on its carbon budget – how many years do we have left at our current rate of emissions, and what % of these emissions do we need to cut year on year to meet our targets?”

Response

Carbon dioxide emissions across Trafford were 1,442.1 ktCO₂e in 2021, the latest year for which we have data (the data is published by the Government every summer, two years in arrears). This was a 34% decrease since 2005, but a 13% increase from 2020, as we came out of the Covid-19 lockdowns. If the rate of emissions reductions in the years before Covid were continued, we would use up the carbon budget indicated by the Tyndall Centre for Trafford for this century within 4 years. This highlights the urgent need for accelerated action from all partners across Trafford. We estimate that to achieve the 2038 target will now require a reduction rate of 17.5% year on year.

Supplementary Question

“While we acknowledge that national government has a central role to play, given these disastrous numbers, can the council agree to urgently pursue every avenue in their control to reduce emissions, including: stopping plans for a new road across Carrington Moss, stopping Labour’s plans to double the use of the airport, and divesting the GMPF from fossil fuels?”

Response to Supplementary Question

The Council is collaborating with partners across Trafford and Greater Manchester in an effort to accelerate progress towards our carbon neutrality target. We are taking action across a range of areas. The Council:

- Has shown leadership by reducing its own GHG emissions by almost 17% in just 4 years (2018/19 to 2021/22), through taking action to decarbonise its estate and fleet.
- Has carried out feasibility work on the option of developing a low carbon heat network in the Civic Quarter in Trafford and is looking to develop an outline business case.
- Is targeting the key emissions sector in Trafford – industry – by taking forward a partnership with the Growth Company to encourage and support low carbon action in businesses across Trafford Park.
- Continues to engage key influential organisations and high energy users in Trafford through the Climate Emergency Commission.
- Has published a Cycling, Walking & Wheeling strategy, encouraging active travel.
- Is enabling the VCFSE sector to accelerate action on Climate Change.
- Is working with GMCA to promote take up of the ECO4: Energy Company Obligation phase 4 which supports low income and vulnerable households to make their homes more energy efficient, and the GM-level Your Home Better programme which encourages ‘Willing to Pay’ households to make home energy improvements.
- Is working in partnership with Be.EV to drive forward electric vehicle charging infrastructure. Trafford currently has coverage in 14 out of the 21 wards in Trafford.

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In relation to Carrington Infrastructure, it is impossible to provide the homes and jobs that our communities will need in future without securing Transport improvements. The Carrington Relief Road is part of a much wider strategy for accessibility in the locality – which includes a full range of sustainable travel modes. However, it is important to stress that the highway will be built to a modern design – active travel modes will be dedicated significantly more road space (generally around 35%) than vehicles – with full segregation and separate lanes for walking and wheeling. Finally, I should also emphasise that whilst the area is known locally as Carrington Moss, the historic moss land and associated peat deposits lie well to the south of the planned route.

In relation to the airport, Manchester Airports Group (MAG) was the first UK airport group to achieve carbon neutrality in 2016 and the only airport operator to be named a Financial Times' 'Climate Leader' three years in a row. MAG was ranked the number one European airport operator in the 2021 GRESB Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) rating. MAG retained a five-star rating in the 2022 and 2023 assessments. Having reduced gross emissions by 87%, MAG launched its latest Corporate Social Responsibility Strategy 'Working together for a brighter future', committing to transition to net zero carbon by 2038, in line with Greater Manchester's target and 2 years ahead of the UK's national target for airports. In addition, MAG is a founding member and one of only two airport operators to sit on the UK Government's Jet Zero Council. MAG recognises the need to work alongside the aviation industry including airline partners and has pursued partnerships to aim to make Manchester Airport the first airport in the UK with a direct pipeline to Sustainable Aviation Fuel and Hydrogen. In terms of the wider aviation sector, the UK Government has committed to reach net zero for UK Aviation by 2050 through its Jet Zero Strategy published in July 2022. The Government has set out a clear pathway with industry to reach net zero and MAG is committed to working with industry partners to achieve the national target. Moreover, MAG will create a financial incentive as part of its charging arrangements to encourage airlines to go further than the UK Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) mandate on flights from its airports.

In relation to divestment, GMPF has provided the following response: The Fund has seen significantly increased levels of member engagement on climate change over recent years and has given detailed consideration to the issue, including the divestment and engagement approaches to addressing the challenge of a transition to a low carbon economy. GMPF does not typically divest from businesses unless ESG factors, including those related to climate change, are likely to have a financially material negative impact. Instead, GMPF seeks to use its position to influence / address issues of concern.

The Fund carries out an annual "carbon footprint" of its holdings, which is reported to the Management Panel. This assessment helps identify the key sectors and stocks that are contributing to the Fund's carbon risk which can then be managed and provides a quantitative assessment of carbon risk at an absolute level and relative to a benchmark or target.

One way to reduce GMPF's carbon footprint would be to reduce exposure to the highest carbon emitting companies it holds. However, this would only make GMPF 'look good' and will likely have no impact in the real world. Consequently, this would be a form of 'greenwashing'. Selling the highest emitters would mean GMPF would lose its influence to make positive change [a view shared by numerous, well-respected organisations such as the United Nations Principles for Responsible Investment (UNPRI) and the Institutional Investors Group on Climate Change, both of which GMPF is a signatory to] and potentially the buyer may not hold the same environmental values as GMPF. Evidence also suggests that the financial impact of divesting from investee companies is unlikely to alter corporate behaviour. As such, GMPF will continue its established process of engaging with the companies it holds on environmental matters to ensure that these companies are

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considering climate issues ‘front and centre’, and by doing so aim to have a real-world impact. Government regulation will most likely be required to enforce the required real-world decarbonisation by companies.

GMPF won the Investment and Pensions Europe 2022 Pension Fund UK award earlier this year and has also been shortlisted for the Public Sector Pension Fund of 2023 due to its outstanding approach to Stewardship, which includes amongst other things:

- The Fund’s investments already produce more power through renewables than they do from coal and oil;
- The Fund achieved £620 million investment returns in the last 6 years through not disinvesting.
- The Fund’s active equity holdings were 13% less carbon intensive than the benchmark so the Fund is moving in the right direction to becoming carbon neutral;
- The Fund was also the biggest direct local government pensioner investor in renewable energy and energy efficiency, with nearly a billion pounds allocated in a number of areas including biomass and wind farm assets;
- The 2021 Responsible Asset Allocator Initiative triannual Leaders List of the 30 most responsible asset allocators ranked GMPF as 35 in the world of most responsible investors. This was out of a group of the top 634 asset allocators across 98 countries with 36 trillion US dollars in assets. The Fund scored an impressive 94 out of a potential 100 to achieve this rating;
- Last year the Fund set a 2030 interim emissions reduction target in line with the IPCC’s (The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) 1.5 degree pathway and reported these publicly:
 1. Reduce carbon intensity by 50% by 2030 versus 2019 benchmark; and
 2. Between 2021 and 2030, to double investments in climate solutions.

GMPF is operating within a clear ethical framework and seeking to change the behaviours of those companies in which it invests to become carbon neutral whilst protecting the pensions of the Fund’s members and reducing costs to taxpayers. GMPF will not shirk from its leadership role and disinvest allowing others who may not share GMPF’s environmental values to own those shares instead and fail future generations to come.

You can read more about GMPF’s approach to climate risk at:

<https://www.gmpf.org.uk/about/our-approach-to-climate-risk>

Question 10 - Submitted by Councillor Zhi

“Urgent Need for Enhanced Road Safety Measures at Altrincham Grammar School for Girls

During a recent visit to Altrincham Grammar School for Girls, the school teacher expressed deep concerns over the road safety of their students, specifically regarding the crossing on St Margaret Road.

The current crossing infrastructure, notably the traffic island on St Margaret Road, is proving inadequate for the volume of students who traverse this area daily. The layout of the road, especially at the junctions with The Firs and Cavendish Road, allows for vehicles to approach at high speeds, significantly reducing their ability to stop in a timely manner. This situation has led to several near-miss incidents and, regrettably, some minor accidents involving students.

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Given these alarming circumstances, there is an evident and pressing need for the installation of more effective and recognised crossing facilities, such as a Puffin Crossing. Such an upgrade is imperative not only for the safety of hundreds of students who cross this road every day but also for the peace of mind of their parents and the school staff.

As a council that has pledged to prioritise children's safety, The safety of our young citizens should be paramount, and timely action on this matter is essential. The school teacher told me their request has been ignored in the past two years. Could the council tell me why this critical issue has remained unaddressed?"

Response:

The expansion of the Grammar School at Altrincham took place in 2020/21. The planning application and associated traffic and pedestrian access statement submitted by the school identified at that time that there would be no significant impacts on the safety of pedestrians and that any travelling needs and promotion of safe walking routes would be developed by the school as part of their School Travel Plans. Had this been assessed at the time as requiring any additional measures the council could have worked with the school to implement improvements through a contribution that would have been identified as part of the planning application for the expansion.

Due to this missed opportunity the request for any pedestrian improvements has to be assessed alongside many other requests that are received for such facilities.

The provision of a pedestrian crossing facility is influenced by a number of factors and these include the number of people crossing and the amount of traffic passing the site and local features such as hospitals, schools and leisure facilities, such as parks, swimming pools, etc. The width of a road and other physical features, such as junctions, driveways, trees and other street furniture are also factored into the assessment of any particular location.

Due to the size and age of the road network the Council receives many more requests to introduce highway improvements than resources enable to be processed. For this reason, we have to target our resources to where the greatest community benefit will be achieved. We will consider each application on its merits – however there is always a waiting list with a criterion based on safety, congestion or other benefits that that each request will be scored against.

Applications that score highly in terms of this criteria would then be prioritised for further investigations subject to budget availability through the Council's Capital Programme which is agreed each year as part of the annual budget setting process in February each year. At this current time all available funds for this financial year have been allocated. This request has been previously added onto our scheme waiting list for consideration in a future programme of work.

We are only able to progress a small number of these types of crossings due to the associated costs, a puffin crossing can cost in the region of £75k to install. There are currently 43 requests for new pedestrian crossing or upgrades to existing crossing facilities. As there are no recorded injury accidents at this location there is a low probability that any facilities will be installed at this location in the short to medium term.

In the meantime, we can work with the school to help implement a travel plan for pupils, parents and staff that can also look at other measures that may assist with helping to create a safe traveling environment.

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Question 11 - Submitted by Councillor M. Taylor

“Can the member for Children's Services explain to me how it is possible that on receiving a letter from staff members at Well Green Primary, a hugely successfully primary school in Hale Barns, that immediate action was not undertaken to make sure that the children in my ward will be warm this winter.

Why have the council not implemented an immediate, temporary solution such as plug in radiators, to resolve the heating issue, the cost of which must not be born by the school

What is the long term plan to replace the unusable and broken heating system?”

Response

Well Green Primary School have requested that their heating system be replaced as it is dated and the fan convectors that distribute the heat to the classrooms are noisy. The heating system is working, but school turn the heaters off due to the noise.

The local authority receives School Capital Allocation (SCA) from the DfE to invest in priorities across the 39 schools for which we are the responsible body. An established prioritisation system linked to our education asset management plan is used to allocate funding each year. We will shortly be reviewing priorities for the 2024/25 SCA funding and will again make sure that the heating system at Well Green Primary School is considered alongside all other priorities across the school estate.

As the Council now aims to deliver a greener solution for our heating projects, this has opened up opportunities to bid for Salix funding under both Low Carbon Skills Fund and Public Sector Decarbonisation grant. Alongside 10 other schools with similar heating systems, Well Green Primary was put forward for the Low Carbon Skills Fund to support creation of a Heat Decarbonisation Plan, a requirement before you can bid for Public Sector Decarbonisation grant. Unfortunately, the bid was unsuccessful, but we continue to try and source funding via alternative routes as the DfE SCA funding is not sufficient to get through all the priorities.

Question 12 - Submitted by Councillor Newgrosh

“The Liberal Democrat Group warmly welcome road safety improvements and investment.

Can the Executive Member please reassure the public that the expansion of traffic cameras across GM - signed by TfGM with ‘Jenoptik’ this Spring to include 144 new cameras in the first phase and 25 new Average Speed Check Zones, including two in Trafford along the A56 - will include public consultation with residents and input from local councillors?”

Response

Currently TfGM are rolling out replacement upgrades of speed cameras at existing sites hence as this is considered maintenance there is no requirement to consult.

<https://tfgm.com/road-safe/where-are-safety-cameras>

There are potential proposals for other cameras including the average speed check zones which are not planned for rollout as yet. As and when this project starts to develop TfGM will be asked to consult and communicate their proposals prior to any installations.

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