

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.

Scrutiny Committee
12 July 2023

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

Scrutiny Committee
12 July 2023

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

Scrutiny Committee
12 July 2023

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

Scrutiny Committee
12 July 2023

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.

Scrutiny Committee
12 July 2023

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

Scrutiny Committee
12 July 2023

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.

Scrutiny Committee
12 July 2023

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.

Scrutiny Committee
12 July 2023

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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