

Minutes of: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 10 April 2018

Present: Councillor R Caserta (in the Chair)
Councillors T Cummings, M Hankey, J Harris, M James,
Leach, J Lewis, R Skillen, S Smith and J Walker

Also in attendance:

Public Attendance: No members of the public were present at the meeting.

Apologies for Absence: Councillor E Fitzgerald and Councillor S Wright

OSC.456 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Hankey declared a personal interest in Item 7, Managing Parks and Countryside as he is a member of the Burrs Country Park Committee.

Councillor K Leach declared a personal interest in any item relating to the NHS as she was employed by the NHS.

Councillor J Walker declared a personal interest in any item relating to Six Town Housing as he resides in a Six Town Housing property.

Councillor James declared a personal interest in Item 7, Managing Parks and Countryside as he is a member of Prestwich Clough Centenary Group.

OSC.457 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Mr Rob Trueblood explained that he was the leaseholder of The Barn Countryside Centre located in Philips Park. Mr Trueblood referred to the City Forest Park project that was being developed with the Forestry Commission and City of Trees. The plan was to regenerate 330 hectares of green space which borders Bury, Bolton and Salford into a green space and culture hub.

Mr Trueblood explained that this project would include Philips Park which has 2 listed structures within it, used to have a listed garden and was a fragile environment. Mr Trueblood stated that the Forestry Commission doesn't have a background of dealing with historical sites and asked what type of business case the Forestry Commission would be expected to submit to ensure that the project was carried out sympathetically and ensured input from local groups and the local community.

Councillor Quinn explained that he had been asked to sign a memorandum of understanding in relation to the plans but he hadn't been comfortable doing this without discussing the plans with Salford and Bolton Councils' to find out their thoughts on the project.

Councillor Quinn stated that he had asked the Forestry Commission to hold roadshows and involve as many local groups and people in the project as possible. It was hoped that a Board would be established to oversee the project from Bury's perspective.

Councillor Quinn explained that it was very exciting project that would be a great benefit to Bury and Manchester as a whole.

Councillor Jamie Walker reported that the Greater Manchester Scrutiny Committee were looking at the project as part of their work programme and he would ensure that Mr Trueblood's concerns were raised at the next meeting of the Committee.

It was reported that the roadshows would be held after the local elections in May.

OSC.458 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

It was agreed:

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 14 February 2018 be approved as correct records and signed by the Chair.

OSC.459 CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING OVERVIEW PROJECT GROUP - UPDATE

Councillor Susan Southworth, Chair of the Children's Safeguarding Overview Project Group attended the meeting to update the Committee on the work of the project group.

It was explained that the group had been established to review services available to Bury residents to ensure that those services were meeting the needs and requirements of their users and future users.

The group was made up of a number of Councillors who each had their own knowledge in relation to safeguarding from being ex police, teacher or school governors and working first hand in children's services.

During the 2017/2018 Municipal Year the focus of the group included the following:-

- Phoenix Team and Child Sexual Exploitation – Receive briefing on the work of the team across Greater Manchester with focus on the awareness raising work undertaken and areas of concern within the Borough.
- Healthy Young Minds and SEND update – Karen Whitehead attended the meeting to provide an update on the Healthy Young Minds safeguarding process.
- The Role of the LADO – Mark Gay, the LADO attended the meeting to share with members a presentation on the role and responsibility of the LADO.
- Performance Monitoring – the group continued to receive quarterly monitoring reports in relation to safeguarding children.
- Children with Disabilities – Examination of the support and early intervention provided by the team.
- Placements with Children and their Relatives – Officers attended the meeting to provide an update on the numbers and frequency of placements of looked after children with their relatives.
- Missing from Home – the group were provided with an update on the work being undertaken to address those children reported Missing from Home.

It was explained that the group had met on four occasions, interviewed 14 different Council Officers and had planned to visit the Multi Agency hub as part of its ongoing work.

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were given the opportunity to make comments and ask questions and the following points were raised.

- Councillor Caserta referred to the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which had been held on 6 February 2018 where Karen Dolton had attended. He explained that the Committee had been given the answers to the questions that had been raised in the Newsam Report but the actual questions were not available due to the report being redacted. Councillor Caserta had asked if he could have a copy of the questions but these had not been provided.

Councillor Southworth explained that the Overview Project Group were due to have their next meeting later in the month and she would raise this issue there.

- Councillor Harris referred to the conclusions set out at point 5 of the report and asked whether Councillor Southworth was satisfied that procedures are in place.

Councillor Southworth explained that the members of the group had been interviewed as part of the Ofsted review and it had been recognised that clear political scrutiny was evident and that there were strong sufficient checks and balances in the governance system holding the leadership of children's services to account, providing coherent political and strategic oversight.

- Councillor Smith referred to the reference made to attendance at the meetings and asked if this had improved.

Councillor Southworth reported that attendance hadn't been as high as it should have been over the year. There had been two new Members appointed to the group so this would improve. The group meets four times per year and the meetings commence at 5pm and last for two hours.

- Councillor Caserta referred to 4.1 of the report and the statement that referrals to the phoenix team had reduced over the summer. Councillor Caserta explained that he had been shocked to read the report in the Manchester Evening News relating to arrests made following an investigation into CSE in two of Bury's parks over the summer.

Councillor Caserta asked why the information provided to the group by the Phoenix Team had not included reference to the investigation reported in the M.E.N.

Councillor Southworth referred to the work of the group and the fact that Councillor Caserta was a member of the group and asked if the questions of the group needed to be more incisive. She stated that the group were meeting soon and would have the opportunity to ask questions around the investigation.

Councillor Walker explained that the political groups had been briefed on the situation at their group meetings. He also suggested that as it was an ongoing investigation they the details should not be discussed.

Councillor Harris suggested that the situation should definitely be pursued further by the Overview Project Group at their next meeting.

It was agreed:

1. That the work of the Overview Project Group be carried over into the new Municipal Year.
2. That the Membership of the Group be included within the Annual Appointments report of the Council as an ongoing Committee.
3. That regular updates be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the work of the Group.
4. That the Group, in consultation with the Assistant Director of Learning and Culture examine the feasibility of establishing a Borough wide "Closing the Gap" Group in respect of Educational Achievement (carried forward from last year).

OSC.460 MANAGING PARKS AND COUNTRYSIDE

Councillor Quinn, Cabinet Member for Environment presented a report giving an overview of how Parks and Countryside are being managed as well as future plans in moving the section forward positively.

It was explained that the Parks and Countryside service has responsibility for the health and safety, management and development of all the Council's parks and countryside areas. The service manages land and buildings assets and facilitates the Asset Transfer Strategy, developing partnerships with local clubs and organisations to promote self management of sports pitches, bowling greens and allotments.

The services also encourages and facilitates local communities and organisations to be actively involved in parks and the countryside through volunteering and friends of the parks groups. The service looks to find innovative ways to involve local businesses and individuals through sponsorship and marketing, including North West and Britain in Bloom and the Green Flag Award.

The report contained information relating to how the team carried out work in the following areas; health and safety; maintenance; individual service elements; asset transfer strategy; community involvement; invasive weed control; and Chalara Fraxinea (Ash die back) management.

The report also set out work that was being carried out in relation to future projects including; 1000 acre woodland and the Burrs strategy and Burrs Activity Centre.

Those present were given the opportunity to ask questions and make comments and the following points were raised:-

- Councillor Hankey referred to invasive weeds such as giant hogweed and pests affecting trees and asked whether the problem was due to climate the global community or both.

Councillor Quinn explained that the issues were due to both factors. One area that needed work was more vigorous control in relation to importing.

- Councillor Hankey referred to Ash die back and asked what was being done about this issue.

Councillor Quinn explained that Ash die back did not kill the tree but affected its immune system so that it would die at some point in the future. The plan to ensure that other trees were planted to make sure that when the time came for the Ash trees to be removed, replacements had already been planted and were established.

- Councillor James referred to the level of staffing within the team and asked for a breakdown.

Neil Long explained that the management figures were set out in the report. There were also a team of gardeners which numbers changed seasonally. There were also volunteer gardeners and the volunteer rangers.

- Councillor Harris referred to the information provided relating to farmers carrying out grass cutting on some sites and asked whether more of this could be pursued.

It was explained that for this to happen the sites have to meet a number of criteria such as type and length of grass as well as the size of the site.

Neil explained that there was a lot of work carried out with regard to sponsorship of flowerbeds and signage from local garden centres and businesses which amounted to around £40,000.

- Councillor Smith referred to Japanese Knotweed and asked how the treatment of this could be ensured on privately owned land.

It was explained that there was a lot of work being carried out in relation to the treatment of both Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed. It was anticipated that a cross borough team would be established to work jointly on this issue.

- Councillor Caserta referred to the reduction in budget that the teams had to work with and asked if Section 106 monies could be used for any of the work required.

Neil Long explained that Section 106 money is allocated at the point of planning application and stipulates the work that will be done. Section 106 money is mainly used to sustain safe play areas. The allocated of the money is monitored to Ensure that it has been used as was set out in the application.

- Councillor Walker asked whether the document setting out the City Forest Park plan could be shared with all Councillors.

Councillor Quinn stated that he would ask that the Committee receive a presentation from the Forestry Commission in relation to the City Forest Park regeneration.

It was agreed:

That Councillor Quinn and Neil Long be thanked for the update.

OSC.461 AIR QUALITY UPDATE

Councillor Quinn, Cabinet Member for Environment and Lorraine Chamberlin presented a report providing Members with an update on the work being carried out in relation the air quality across the borough.

It was explained that DEFRA had released their "UK plan for tackling roadside nitrogen dioxide concentrations" which aim to reduce concentrations of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) to achieve statutory targets in the whole of the UK within the shortest time possible. The Government set a clear view that action should be led at a local level.

DEFRA had identified a list of 29 local Councils that are predicted to have the greatest problems meeting air quality targets for NO₂ beyond the next 3 - 4 years. The list includes Bury with the area identified as having problems meeting the targets being Bury Bridge.

The identified Councils are required to produce an innovative local plan to meet nitrogen dioxide targets in the shortest time possible. This will mean identifying interventions which will persuade drivers of polluting vehicles to transfer to public transport; travel along alternative routes; or transfer to a less polluting vehicle. The initial version of the plan must be submitted for approval by March 2018 and a final version by December 2018.

A Clean Air Fund of £225m has been made available by the Government to enable Councils to carry out feasibility studies to consider options and implement the identified measures.

It was reported that TfGM take the lead on air pollution across Greater Manchester and will be leading on the production of the local plan. The final plan will be called the GM Clean Air Plan and will be produced in the form of a robust business case that will be developed in 3 stages:-

- Strategic Outline Case
- Outline Business Case
- Full Business Case

The Strategic Outline Case had been submitted to DEFRA on 7 March.

It was reported that alongside the development of the GM Clean Air Plan, the Council will also be consulting on Bury's own Climate Change and Low Emissions Plan which will describe how the Council proposes to address climate change and improve air quality over the next 5 years. The actions within the document will complement and enhance the GM Clean Air Plan.

A Clean Air Day event was planned to be held on 21 June 2018 and will include a showcase for electric vehicles and electric bikes. This will be held in Bury Town Centre.

Those present were given the opportunity to ask questions and make comments and the following points were raised:-

- Councillor Harris asked where the Council were up to with the local plan.

It was explained that the local plan would be presented to Council soon and the GM plan was at the stage of choosing a preferred method for Bury.

Councillor Quinn explained that options were being considered for retrofitting buses with Euro 6 engines which would reduce the amount of emissions.

- Councillor Harris asked when the plan was due to be implemented.

It was reported that the deadline was 29 March 2019. There was lots of work being done currently including works to the Metrolink network and work in relation to the regulation of buses across GM.

Councillor Quinn explained that there had been a big increase in traffic across the borough since 2013. It was essential that good, affordable public transport was in place to encourage people to use it.

- Councillor Walker referred to the use of electric vehicles and stated that all new build properties should be fitted with an electric charging point and solar panels to promote this.

It was agreed:

1. That the contents of the report be noted.
2. That an update on the progress made be brought to a future meeting of the Committee.

OSC.462 COUNCIL RUN CAR PARKS

Councillor Quinn and David Fowler presented a briefing note giving information in relation to the Council owned pay and display car parks across Bury Town Centre.

It was reported that there were 12 car parks across Bury Town Centre all of which were currently pay and display. The total number of spaces available across the sites was reported as being 1544.

Privately owned and run car parks across the town centre had 3434 spaces available.

The Council runs both short stay and long stay car parks and provides contract parking and parking for staff permit holders.

Most of the car parks were full all week apart from Tuesdays and Thursdays with the exception of Manchester Road Car park which remained full on these days.

There had been no tariff increases for approximately 5 years. If and when tariff increases are being considered checks are made with other town centre competitor, neighbouring boroughs and the possibility

The total income for Council owned car parks for 2017 was reported as being £1,138,143.

It was also reported that the annual income generated from PCNs issued on car parks was approximately £150,000.

It was explained that the Council were currently considering different pricing options for different (non-market) days and a pay on exit option for some of the car parks but this may lead to queues.

- Councillor Hankey asked whether the pay and display machines that were currently in use were sophisticated enough to allow for different tariffs on different days.

David Fowler stated that all options needed to be considered as the Council needed to provide the best service possible whilst raising money. The money raised from car parking charges went back into the highways. If the machines required updating in order to provide the service then this would be done.

- Councillor Harris referred to the need to attract businesses to Bury and asked whether parking charges were a factor that they considered.

David explained that he wasn't aware of any businesses being put off by parking charges.

- Councillor Smith referred to the charges for parking on privately owned car parks and asked that the Council keep monitoring this to ensure that the prices were competitive.
- Councillor Walker referred to the Council promoting less use of cars and more use of public transport and how this factored into car parking.

David Fowler explained that there were up to thirty, fifty seater coaches bringing visitors to Bury Market every Wednesday and Friday as well as the tram and bus station.

It was agreed:

That Councillor Quinn and David Fowler be thanked for the update.

COUNCILLOR R CASERTA
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 9.20 pm)