

Minutes of: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 1 November 2023

Present: Councillor D Vernon (in the Chair)
Councillors R Bernstein, C Birchmore, A Arif, N Bayley,
N Boroda, T Pilkington, G Marsden, E Moss, M Rubinstein and
E FitzGerald

Also in attendance: Councillor C Morris, Councillor E O'Brien (Leader and Cabinet Member Strategic Growth) and Councillor A Quinn (Cabinet Member Environment, Climate Change and Operations)
Lynne Ridsdale, Chief Executive, Jacqui Dennis, Monitoring Officer, Chloe Ashworth, Democratic Services, Clare Williams, Interim Deputy Director of Finance, Donna Ball, Executive Director Operations and Cris Logue, Assistant Director of Strategy, Planning & Development.

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

Apologies for Absence: Councillor D Green

OSC.1 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Green, Councillor FitzGerald attended as substitute.

OSC.2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Pilkington declared a personal interest as a representative of Bury Autism Partnership.

OSC.3 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

OSC.4 MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were two Member questions received in advance of the meeting

The following question was submitted in advance of the meeting by Councillor Lancaster; I have been advised by the council in the attached that they will not be posting an online consultation for Ainsworth residents regarding the new proposed traffic calming measures. This plan is very important to our community in Ainsworth and the council have only consulted with a small number of residents by post. As this consultation period ends on 6th November, please could the council explain what will be done to ensure all residents voices are heard. And can the consultation period be extended until this issue has been rectified.

In response Donna Ball, Director of Operations advised that following discussions with the Communications Team, it has been agreed that the consultation will be uploaded onto an online consultation platform and the consultation period will be extended for a couple of weeks.

Councillor Quinn, Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member Environment, Climate Change and Operations advised consultations are taking place with members of the public and other partners to help a solution for members to slow down.

The following question was submitted in advance of the meeting by Councillor Rydeheard; "At full Council on Wednesday 13 September, I asked Cllr Gareth Staples-Jones a supplementary question, which attempted to elicit a cost for the rebranding of all of Greater Manchester's bus stops for the implementation of the Bee Network. He said that he would ensure that enquiries were made and that I would be provided with an answer, but over a month later I have heard nothing. Please can the cabinet member now confirm to me the cost of the yellow stickers to update all of the bus stops in Greater Manchester to the new Bee Network branding?"

In response the Committee is informed that Bury Council do not hold this information. Officers have contacted TfGM who have advised that they are looking into the rebranding costs. Officer's will circulate a response as soon as the information is received from TfGM.

OSC.5 MINUTES

That the minutes of the meeting held on 04th October 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

OSC.6 BURY MARKET

Further to the published agenda the Chair Councillor Vernon agreed an item of urgent business which is an update on Bury Market, it was also agreed this item will be taken first on the agenda.

Councillor Morris, Cabinet Member, Culture, Economy and Skills provided an update to members to provide reassurance and confidence to members. Councillor Morris Cabinet Member, Culture, Economy and Skills wished to place on record thanks for the hard work of Donna Ball, Executive Director of Operations, the Operations service, the Business Growth and Infrastructure service and Jacqui Dennis from a legal perspective.

Members were informed that Bury Council took the decision on Thursday evening to close the indoor market from Friday Morning with the primary concern being the safety of the traders, public and businesses. As soon as the decision was taken the team have worked to relocate and open traders for business. Bury Council recognise it is difficult for traders but the rest of market is open as usual as we still want people to visit and support those stalls still open.

Donna Ball, Executive Director of Operations informed committee that Bury Council was made aware on 26th November 2023 of the decision at 1:00pm that the structural engineer confirmed that the risk of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAK) will go to red when earlier it was anticipated it would be amber. Following review it was apparent some panels were in distress and according to the HSE guidance it is very clear what needs to be done. At 5:00pm the same day the market was sealed to all.

Within the market hall there are 62 units with 49 traders/businesses. Following closure of the market hall the experts were able to access the ceiling above the 16 units surrounding the market hall. Following further inspection of all 16 units they were able to open on the Saturday following the Friday closure. Currently 2 of the market hall traders have opted to trade outside on the open market and a further 2 are operating in pop-up stalls in the mill gate square. The market management team have worked with the Millgate to identify 15 vacant units and a further 6 vacant units owned by council. The remaining 21 trader requirements have been

collated and the market management team have worked out which will work collaboratively. Pleased that every trader who wishes to be relocated has been found an alternative location. A package of measures has been put in place immediately for the traders and at 4pm each evening a briefing note goes out to all traders. The briefing includes support available including access to a hardship fund, GM hub counselling support, GM hub provision providing cash flow support or debtors advice. Bury Council has reached an agreement that rent and utility bills stop so traders do not need to worry about these costs and further discussions are still on going.

Members were informed if they are contacted with Bury Market queries they should be directed to the Markets Team or Donna Ball, Executive Director of Operations.

Members sought assurances on when notification could be given. Members were informed that Thursday showed a potential of amber rating which quickly changed to red on the same day and so no earlier action could have been taken.

A member questioned about signage for trade relocation. Members were informed the market team will support this

Members were advised financial loss cannot be given as a figure currently. Rent and service charges, traders have been asked to go to their insurance companies regarding any loss of earnings. Members were advised that re-housed traders will not pay any more than currently paying now for the first 3 months.

Members sought assurances if we know if other buildings may be effected. Members were informed that the potential of RACC in buildings has been focused on school premises and these have shown to have no issues. We are now looking wider and this is how Bury Market has been identified. Procurement is currently taking place to ensure no further buildings have it. There is a 20 year time frame and we are also looking 5 years before and after.

Members made reference to the accelerated land disposal scheme and buildings that have been identified to be investigated.

It was agreed:

1. Councillor Morris, Cabinet Member, Culture, Economy and Skills and Donna Ball, Executive Director, Operations be thanked for their work and update.

OSC.7 BURY LOCAL TRANSPORT STRATEGY

Councillor O'Brien and Councillor Quinn presented a short overview of Bury Local Transport Strategy. Last month, Cabinet approved a final version of the Bury Local Transport Strategy. This followed a 3-month public consultation period over April to June on the draft Strategy on which Overview and Scrutiny had been consulted in March.

The final Strategy remains organised around six main objectives, with six key investment priorities for each type of transport but has been amended to take on board the consultation feedback.

The key messages from the consultation were that public transport is not good enough, bus services are unreliable, there's a lack of services in some parts of the borough, and people don't feel safe when using public transport, walking or cycling, with anti-social behaviour and fear of crime being big concerns. In addition there were differing views on whether we were doing enough for motorists, or enough for pedestrians and cyclists.

The Strategy aims to make it easier for everyone to get around and give people a real choice of how they travel. It is not anti-car and includes measures that will reduce congestion and make journey times more reliable for everyone, such as managing roadworks better and improving traffic signals. As public transport gets better and walking and cycling routes become safer and more joined up, we should see a gradual change in how people travel.

A member asked questions regarding the consultation response rate. Members were informed that the Bury Local Transport Strategy is not a statutory document and as such there was no legal requirement for consultation to take place, but rather consultation was something the Council chose to do in order to get feedback on the draft strategy and to hear from a cross section of the population. Numerous different consultation methods were used to engage with as many residents and stakeholders as possible. The survey was open to everyone, including all residents, visitors and commuters, and respondents were therefore self-selecting, rather than being a statistical sample. Responses were received from across all demographics and no real differences in opinion were found. Respondents weren't asked to sign in on arrival at the drop-in events and as such we don't have attendance figures.

Discussions took place regarding the importance of encouraging people to walk, and how improvement in the standard of pavements in the Borough would support this initiative.

Discussions took place regarding small bus routes and the vehicles used to support these short trips. Members were informed that a key part of Greater Manchester's bus reform plans is the introduction of many more high frequency 'turn up and go' services on main bus routes, including routes in Bury.

A member questioned if the Council held data that gives an indication of workplace final destination for residents in Bury MBC. Members were informed that according to census data (2021), around a third of Bury residents in employment commute out of the borough (figures are 31%, or 27,010 residents). By far the biggest flow is to Manchester (25.7% - 6932), followed by Rochdale, Bolton and Salford, each with outflows of between 13% and 15% (14.6%, 13.4% and 12.8% respectively).

It was agreed:

1. To thank the Leader and Councillor Quinn for their attendance
2. To circulate the data requested by Councillor Birchmore to all members
3. To share the strategy with another forum such as Greater Manchester Autism Consortium to provide some feedback regarding neurodiversity impacts to scrutinised and provide some feedback

OSC.8 QUARTER 2 FINANCE REPORT

Councillor Gold, Cabinet Member for Communities and Finance provided a brief overview of the reports relating to the Quarter 2 Finance report.

A member sought assurances regarding the Children and Young People department. In response members were advised that the budget set in February 2023 was based on information known at the time on the number of residential placements for children in care has experienced unprecedented growth during the year. At the beginning of the year there was 26 number of residential placements and as at the end of September this number had increased to 36 generating financial pressure.

Historically, the council has not budgeted for agency staff which is a significant part of the overspend and the current forecast outturn reflects this high level of spend in 2023/24. This has been resolved through a change in policy for 2024/25 through a zero-based budgeting exercise carried out over the summer. In addition, to address this high level of spend in agency

social workers for future years the council has recruited 24 permanent social workers from the international market. Home to School Transport is also contributing to the forecast overspend due to growth in demand for home to school transport particular for children and young people with Education and Health Care Plans and high inflationary costs for transport. The increase in demand for placements for children in care, agency staff and transport continue to reflect national and regional issues.

Discussions took place regarding delays to three regeneration schemes. Members were informed that the Capital budget is reviewed on a regular basis as part of budget monitoring and the quarter 2 review resulted in the re-phasing which is based on feedback received from programme managers on estimated scheme delivery plans.

Members sought assurances on the Councils ability to control saving. In response members were informed that the capital programme has been rephased as previously it had not been achievable. In addition there is a Financial Improvement Panel (FIP) and Financial Improvement Plan to manage the delivery of savings. Members were assured each Cabinet Member was responsible for each of the departmental savings so this did not need to be in the Corporate Plan.

Discussions took place around the progress of deliver. Members were informed that Children and Young People placements are a large proportion of the departmental over spend and this is similar to other councils. Members were informed that the issue in the Children and Young People department is the scale of the demand.

Members discussed lobbying for more funding. Members were informed that the final draft of the 'Lets fix it together' campaign will launch petition and write to Members of Parliament to call for fairer funding.

Members discussed progress of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and were informed it is set for December Cabinet.

It was agreed:

1. Officers and Councillor Gold be thanked for the update and reports.

COUNCILLOR D VERNON
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 7.02 pm and ended at 10.20 pm)