

PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING, 7th DECEMBER, 2022

Present – Councillors Veevers (Chairman), Weatherby (Vice-Chairman), Atcha, M. Ayub, Donaghy, Grant, Hartigan, Heslop, Mistry (as deputy for Councillor Haworth), Meehan, A. Patel, S. Patel, Silvester (as deputy for Councillor Iqbal) and Walsh.

Also in Attendance

Councillor Mrs. Fairclough	Executive Cabinet Member Deputy Leader
Councillor Haslam	Executive Cabinet Member Highways and Transport
Councillor Hewitt	Executive Cabinet Member Strategic Housing and Planning
Councillor Muslim	Executive Cabinet Member Environmental Services Delivery
Councillor Warren	Executive Cabinet Member Regeneration
Mr. J. Dyson	Director of Place
Mr. P. Whittingham	Assistant Director Development and Regeneration
Mr. D. Lowe	Assistant Director Highways and Engineering
Mr. M. Kay	Head of Planning
Mrs. V. Ridge	Democratic Services Manager

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillors Haworth and Iqbal

Councillor Veevers in the Chair.

19. MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings of the Place Scrutiny Committee held on 19th October and 16th November, 2022 were submitted.

Resolved – That the minutes be agreed and signed as a correct record.

20. THE COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received a report which set out details of the updated Committee work programme.

Resolved – That the updated work programme position, as outlined be agreed.

21. ROAD SAFETY

Mr. D. Lowe, Assistant Director of Highways and Engineering gave a presentation which outlined issues associated with road safety in the Borough.

Information was provided in relation to the following, viz:-

- Killed and Seriously Injured performance data;
- Statistical information in relation to casualty trend from 2010 including annual data to March, 2022 and projection to 2030 in Bolton;
- The National Highways and Transport Network Survey;
- GM Strategy – Road Danger Reduction Action Plan;
- GM Safer Roads Group;
- Vision Zero;
- The key interventions which were as follows
 - Engagement – campaigns; school ambassadors; crucial crew; safe pass; traffic cadets; and driver education
 - Enforcement – speed
 - Engineering

In terms of the priorities for 2023/2024 and beyond these were as follows, viz:-

- GM Road Danger Reduction Action Plan
 - Tackle repeat offenders, anti-social driving and recruit more road police officers; and

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- Council plan to develop action plan to deliver upon GM Strategy
- Investment in infrastructure:
- TFGM:
 - Safety camera upgrades which include speeding, red light running and speed on green;
 - Average speed cameras – considering opportunities on key routes;
 - Streets for all – people centred approach to street design and reduce speed and provide safe crossings and connections
- Council:
 - Funding for Zebra Crossings – 10 near to schools;
 - Investigating camera enforcement of anti-social driving

Members in their discussions referred to –

- The difficulties in getting officers to respond to requests for the erection of safety signs around the Borough for which funding had been agreed;
- Poor lighting for pedestrians;
- Traffic Regulation Orders submitted to highways but not getting a response and this was the situation across the Borough;
- How were decisions made in relation to identifying intervention areas;
- The need to increase and improve enforcement, in particular, around schools;
- Why were the Council installing zebra crossings rather than pelican crossings;
- Opportunity to have road safety competitions in schools;
- The criteria used to identify the locations for zebra crossings;
- Appropriate sentencing for drivers who were convicted of road traffic accidents;
- The need to educate cyclists;
- Lack of police enforcement;
- How camera enforcement of anti-social driving would operate;

- Disappointed and frustrated with the progress made on road safety and hope that this could be improved;
- The school ambassador programme which had a very good uptake;
- Where did the funding for zebra crossings come from; and
- The involvement of the colleges and the University to educate young people.

Resolved - (i) That Mr. Lowe be thanked for his detailed and informative presentation and that the position be noted.

(ii) That the rota for mobile enforcement officers be circulated to members of the Scrutiny Committee and that concerns over a lack of response to requests for Traffic Regulation Order's be investigated.

22. PLANNING SERVICES

Mr. M. Kay, Head of Planning gave a presentation which updated members on the work being undertaken within the Planning Service.

Members were reminded that the Planning Service was made up of 4 main workstreams supported by a Technical Support Team:-

1. Development Management – consideration and determination of planning applications;
2. Enforcement – regularisation of breaches of planning control;
3. Building Control – administration of Building Control; and
4. Strategy – contribution to GM Strategic Plan – Places for Everyone and policy support.

Members were also advised that progress had been made in a number of areas since 2021 and these were detailed as follows, viz:-

- Service improvements;

- Validation Checklist;
- Premium Services;
- Software;
- Open cases;
- Workload;
- Open applications by type;
- Work in Progress;
- The number of applications received annually;
- Headlines;
- Complaints and Enquiries;
- Enforcement;
- Building Control;
- Strategy; and
- The overall current position.

Members in their discussion referred to –

- How many cases were still overdue;
- How many posts within the service were still vacant;
- The current situation with staff working from home/the office;
- The public were unhappy with the planning service and how it was performing;
- Statistical information on the performance of the planning service to be a standard item on the work programme;
- The planning portal was a lot more stable and the members inbox was very useful;
- Enforcement of breaches in conservation areas;
- How many retrospective planning applications were received and was there an extra charge for being retrospective;
- Key Performance Indicators should be readily available;
- The length of time taken to make a decision on an application and how long do outstanding applications go back;
- How do Planning Officers monitor Section 106 Agreements;
- Could the backlog be outsourced;
- The situation with agency staff;
- The presentation was welcomed; and

- A lot of the problems were historical, however, the approach which was now being taken was very pragmatic.

A motion was then moved and seconded which stated that statistical information on the planning service in relation to the following be a standing item on the work programme for this Committee, viz:-

- Key Performance Indicators;
- Outstanding applications;
- The oldest applications;
- Those applications which had been resolved; and
- The number of cases waiting to be allocated.

The motion was then put to the vote when the voting was as follows:-

For the Motion, 14 viz:-

Councillors Atcha, M. Ayub, Donaghy, Grant, Hartigan, Heslop, Mistry, Meehan, A. Patel, S. Patel, Silvester, Veevers, Walsh and Weatherby.

Against the Motion, 0

Abstained, 0

Whereupon, the motion was declared carried.

Resolved – (i) That Mr. Kay be thanked for his detailed and informative presentation and that the position be noted.

(ii) That a standing item in relation to Planning service performance indicator information (to be determined by the officer team in consultation with the Executive Cabinet Member for Strategic Housing and Planning, Chair of the Planning Committee and Chair of this Scrutiny Committee) be included in the work programme for this Scrutiny Committee.

23. MEMBERS' BUSINESS

The following Members Questions were submitted by Councillor Silvester in accordance with Standing Order 36 and the response was prepared by the Director of Place in consultation with the Executive Cabinet Member.

Mayoral Floral Display in Queens Park

Q1.

The Executive Cabinet Member for Environmental Service Delivery, Cllr. Muslim in answer to a question from myself at the full meeting of the Council on the 30th November, stated that the cost of ending the Mayoral floral display in Queens Park amounted to £5000.

Could a breakdown of each individual cost element and these amounts associated with the make up of the total £5000 amount be provided so that it is understood how this £5000 was arrived at and what each component cost amount of this was for.

A1.

In response to the above question, the savings value for the Mayoral Floral Decoration was calculated as:

- Supply of Crest InstaPlant Carpet Bed Size: 5.64m wide (max) x 5.33m high (max) £4,000
(based on 2020 actual cost of £3,995 rounded)
- Site Preparation and Installation Cost Estimate £1,000
(labour, transport, plant hire & materials).

Total Projected Saving £5,000

Additional information

The design (drawn up on a CAD grid system) was pre-grown by the supplier and delivered as 'tiles' in trays which then had to be laid and pegged/pinned in location after the ground had been rotovated and prepared (on a slope). The installation estimate allowed for a team of 4 for one day - further information is provided in the attached quotation (dated 2020).

In addition, it should be noted that there have also been 'time' savings associated with the routine maintenance (clipping 4 weekly) and repair (the floral display was susceptible to vandalism damage) but these were not 'cashable' savings.

Body Armour for Security and Response Staff

Q2.

To protect our Security and Response staff quite rightly from any potential violence or attack, body armour was recently purchased for them to wear whilst on duty.

Security and Response staff were wearing this body armour before the full meeting of the Council on the 30th of November. Protection of our staff is of paramount importance.

This follows an incident inside Oldham Civic Centre before the full meeting of that Council on the 2nd of November after members of the public forcibly tried to enter that Civic building.

What was the cost of this body armour and was this amount taken from the main Security and Response budget or was this taken from a reserve budget or another directorates budget with the purchase being unexpected?

A2.

The cost of the body armour for all Security and Response staff who could / do come in to contact with the public was approximately £9k.

The cost of providing body armour was contained within the Security and Response budget.

Councillor Silvester stated that he was happy that the cost of providing body armour was contained within budget and wanted to place on record his thanks to the Security and Response Team for keeping members, staff and the public safe in all of the civic buildings.

The minutes of various meetings relevant to the remit of this Committee were also submitted, viz –

- (i) Executive Cabinet Member Highways and Transport held on 21st November, 2022;
- (ii) Executive Cabinet Member Regeneration held on 21st November, 2022;
- (iii) Executive Cabinet Member Deputy Leader held on 21st November, 2022; and
- (iv) Executive Cabinet Member for Environmental Services Delivery held on 25th October and 22nd November, 2022.

Resolved – (i) That the members questions be noted.

(ii) That the minutes be noted.

(The meeting started at 6.00 p.m. and finished at 8.10 p.m.)

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NOTES