

Confident Places Scrutiny Committee

6.00 pm, 30 November 2022

Present at the meeting

Councillor J O'Brien (Chairman)
Councillor B J Taylor (Vice-Chair)
Councillor J Atherton
Councillor P Cullen
Councillor G Davies

Councillor S Dawber
Councillor D Fletcher
Councillor L Hunt
Councillor W Rotherham
Councillor J P Watson

Officers in attendance

Paul Barton, Director - Environment
Claire Burnham, Assistant Director - Skills and Enterprise
Kay East, Democratic Services Scrutiny Officer
Gareth Jones, Service Manager - Development Management and Building Control
David Proctor, Assistant Director - Planning and Regeneration

24 Apologies for absence:

Councillors Crosby, Flemming, Hodgkinson, McLoughlin and Palmer.

25 Minutes:

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

26 Whipping Declarations:

Government guidance expected Members of Scrutiny Committees not to act in accordance with party whipping and that, if they did, they were to declare it.

Resolved: There were no declarations made.

27 Deal for Business:

The Committee considered a report of the Assistant Director – Skills and Enterprise, Claire Burnham, presented by the Assistant Director, which provided an update on the refreshed Deal for Business which was launched in December 2021, and outlined the collaborative approach taken with the Business Consortium, the key learning points, whilst also seeking Member input on how the reach of the scheme could be expanded.

During its discussions the Committee raised the following salient points:-

- Members being invited to the Business Festival taking place on 8 February 2023 at The Edge;
- whether the Council was approaching small businesses with a realistic offer;
- whether the gold award criteria was set too high;
- the welcoming of the approach and the Deal for Business being a step in the right direction to help local businesses; and

- how vital it was to help support market traders during the redevelopment of the Galleries project and to encourage footfall to the market.

The Assistant Director informed the Committee that the Council was taking a more holistic approach with local businesses and having conversations around things that were working well for them and what their challenges were.

The Assistant Director advised Members that the Council had set achievable targets for businesses and the team were working alongside them to gain the bronze, silver and gold awards. The criteria for the awards were co-designed with businesses and a number of businesses had already achieved gold. As part of the annual review, it was anticipated that a number of businesses would move up a grade from bronze to silver, or silver to gold. Over the coming months the team would be working hard to engage more businesses in the Deal for Business.

Resolved: The Committee:-

- (1) thanks Assistant Director for her report; and
- (2) endorses the work undertaken for the refreshed Deal for Business.

28 Climate Change Strategy - Annual Progress Report

The Committee considered a report and presentation of the Director – Environment, Paul Barton, presented by the Climate Strategic Officer, Kate Moody, which provided the second update on action undertaken on the climate crisis, whilst highlighting each of the climate action themes and providing an update on Wigan Council emissions for 2021/22 and Wigan Borough emissions for 2020, along with a look ahead to priority actions on climate for the next 12 months.

During its discussions, the Committee raised the following salient points:-

- the positivity of the Youth Cabinet and schools being involved in the work for climate change;
- how the vehicle charging infrastructure would be developed for electric car owners who lived in terraced houses and whether the charging infrastructure was being developed to allow for faster charging times;
- the environmental and public health issues connected to the use and disposal of e-cigarettes, with this information needing to be shared with the Youth Cabinet;
- how more needed to be done to resolve the capacity issue of the Leigh Guided Busway service, as passengers were unable to use the service, which resulted in them using their own transport and contributing to high transport emissions;
- whether the Council was encouraging employers across the borough to install electric vehicle charging points;
- improvements needed to the national train service, to encourage people to use public transport rather than their own vehicles; and
- the possibility of creating a bus shuttle service for Council workers.

The Climate Strategic Officer informed the Committee that different types of charging infrastructure were being reviewed, with the sale of new petrol/diesel cars being phased out by 2030 and research being undertaken to ensure that motorists had access to vehicle charging infrastructure. New technologies were being produced at a great pace and Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) and Greater Manchester

(GM) had created a working group to examine this issue. Some newer vehicles were powered by hydrogen and would not require a charging point.

The Director advised Members that the Council were adding charging points to staff carparks and six were due to be installed at the Makerfield Depot. The private sector had also started to install charging points for their staff and the overall stock of charging points was relatively good across the borough, but there more work was still to be done.

The Director informed Members that charging technology was improving rapidly – an electric car could now be fully charged significantly quicker, compared to recent years where this would have taken up to 12/24 hours. Technology was moving at pace, with constant improvements being made that had a positive impact on climate change.

Resolved: The Committee:-

- (1) thanks the Climate Change Manager for her report and presentation;
- (2) endorses the second Annual Progress Report on the Climate Crisis; and
- (3) requests that the Committee's comments and suggestions be considered when progressing the work of the Climate Strategy.

(Councillor Atherton left the meeting following the consideration of this item)

29 Planning Enforcement:

The Committee considered a report of Assistant Director – Planning and Regeneration, David Proctor, presented by the Service Manager – Development Management and Building Control, Gareth Jones, which invited the Committee to consider the Planning Local Enforcement Plan (adopted in January 2021), with consideration to case volumes, the prioritisation process and achieved outcomes.

During its discussions the Committee raised the following salient points:-

- whether the Council were able to prosecute developers in regard to a planning breach that was part of an objection, if the decision to not approve a planning application was overturned by the Planning Inspectorate;
- whether the amount of objections received or the content of an objection carried most weight; and
- the welcoming of the vital enforcement policy.

The Assistant Director informed the Committee that there were clear planning policies that needed to be followed. If the Council refused a planning application and the applicant appealed to the Planning Inspectorate and the decision overturned, then the applicant was free to carry out the development. However, when an application was approved it was done so with a list of planning conditions that the applicant must adhere to, and the Council would still have the power to enforce these conditions.

The Service Manager advised Members that a planning application would be considered by the Planning Committee if it received 10 representations. The content of the representation and whether the basis of the points were material or non-

material in relation to Council and national policy was very important. As one representation with material content would have more weight than many of non-material representations.

Resolved: The Committee:-

- (1) thanks the officers for their report; and
- (2) endorses the Council's approach in relation to the triage, prioritisation and investigation of planning enforcement reports through the processes identified in the adopted Local Enforcement Plan.

Chairman

The meeting concluded at 7.40 pm