

**COMMUNITIES, REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES OF MEETING  
Tuesday, 30 July 2024**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Besford (Chair); Councillors Bromfield, Brown, T. Smith (substitute member), West and D. Williams.

**OFFICERS:** D. Bowler (Assistant Director (Place)), N. Rogers (Assistant Director, Public Protection and Customers), C. Storr (Strategy and Operations Manager), G. Pilkington (Head of Service - Technical and Surveyors), Levi Rickell (Rochdale Development Agency)(Managing Director, Rochdale Development Agency), M. Hale (Head of Planning Services) and J .Jenkinson (Senior Governance and Committee Officer).

**17 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Ellahi, Councillor Nisa, Councillor Place, Councillor Rana, Councillor Taylor and Councillor P. Williams.

**18 URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

There were no items of urgent business.

**19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**20 ITEMS FOR EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

There were no items for exclusion of the public and press.

**21 MINUTES**

**Resolved** - That the minutes of the Communities, Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2024 be approved as a correct record.

**Greater Manchester Combined Authority Scrutiny Minutes**

**22 GMCA OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 20TH MARCH 2024**

**Resolved** - That the minutes of the GMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2024 be noted.

**23 GREATER MANCHESTER POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME PANEL - 14TH MAY 2024**

**Resolved** - That the minutes of the GM Police Fire and Crime Panel meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2024 be noted.

## 24 PUBLIC HEALTH & COMMUNITIES DIRECTORATE PLAN 2024-25: QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE UPDATE

Consideration was given to the Public Health and Communities Directorate Plan 2024-25.

The Assistant Director, Public Protection and Customers introduced the Plan and reported that all (11) actions were currently ongoing.

The Chair then opened the meeting to comments and questions from the Committee. A discussion ensued, during which the following points were raised:

- In relation to point 5.6 'The action regarding developing and embedding a customer service strategy is 50% complete' it was reported that the action was currently 20% and not 50% complete.
- In relation to Ref. PH2402.B 'Work towards being a food secure borough by developing a sustainable food plan plus a planned approach to 'move on' from our network of food banks and food clubs' - Members requested details about how they could get involved in the 'Boro full of Beans' programme.
- Concerns were raised in relation to the proliferation of hot food takeaway premises on the high street and it was asked if any planning controls could be used to restrict the number of empty shops being converted into takeaway outlets. In response, it was advised that essentially it was not a planning enforcement matter and was difficult to control. It was noted that the Council's Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) allocated areas for particular uses. It was agreed to circulate information regarding current policies to the Committee.
- In relation to the development of policies, officers were urged to consider the Council's poverty plan, the intersectionality of socio-economic factors, and to engage in co-production with residents.
- Concerns were raised regarding sweet shops selling American confectionery containing additives that were banned in the U.K. In response, the Assistant Director, Public Protection and Customers agreed to circulate additional information to the Committee.
- In view of the Government's announcement that winter fuel payments would be restricted to those on pension credits or other means-tested benefits – Members asked if the Council had any plans to 'fill the gap' and support vulnerable residents. The Assistant Director, Public Protection and Customers advised that the implications of the new policy were currently being considered and an update would be provided to the Committee.
- It was noted that as a result of the Covid pandemic many local authorities had a backlog of food hygiene inspections – it was asked if Rochdale Council was in a similar position. In response, the Committee was advised that Rochdale Borough Council was in a better position than many other councils and that an annual report detailing the Council's position would be submitted to Cabinet in August 2024.

- In relation to community safety, it was highlighted that each Township now had a Community Safety Lead Officer, and it was requested that an update regarding impact, progress, and future learning be provided to the Committee.
- In addition, it was requested that an update be provided, in relation to the latest Safety Community Partnership report, which had highlighted failings, including insufficient Council dedicated resource.

#### **Resolved –**

1. That the Public Health and Communities Directorate Plan 2024-25: Quarter 1 Performance Update be noted.
2. That the Assistant Director, Public Protection and Customers be requested to circulate to the Committee the following:
  - An update in relation to the latest Safety Community Partnership report.
  - Details regarding the ‘Boro full of Beans’ programme and information about how councillors could get involved.
  - An update in relation to the Government’s winter fuel payment policy and implications for Rochdale residents.
  - Information about the sale of American confectionery in Rochdale.
  - An update in relation to the Township Community Safety Lead Officer roles, including impact, progress and future learning.
3. That the Assistant Director, Public Protection and Customers and Head of Planning Services be requested to provide a briefing note outlining planning policies / powers in relation to hot food takeaway premises.

#### **25 ECONOMY & PLACE DIRECTORATE PLAN 2024-25: QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE UPDATE**

Consideration was given to the Economy and Place Directorate Plan 2024-25, Quarter 1, performance update.

It was reported that that all (11) actions were currently ongoing and on track to be completed by the target date.

The Chair then opened the meeting to comments and questions from the Committee.

During the discussion the following points were raised:

- In response to queries, the Head of Planning Services agreed to circulate an update regarding the development of Warwick Mill, Middleton to Ward Councillors. The Managing Director, Rochdale Development Agency reported that scaffolding was currently in place

and investigative works were being undertaken to consider options for the building.

- Members' attention was drawn to actions being taken in response to the housing emergency. It was explained that a B&B Elimination Plan had been agreed, and it was a corporate priority to reduce the use of bed and breakfast for statutory homeless households and the length of stay exceeding six weeks.
- An update was sought in relation to the regeneration of Middleton Town Centre, and concerns were raised regarding the increasing number of empty shops in the high-street and the declining condition of the public realm. It was requested the Council provide some communication to Middleton residents to allay frustrations. It was suggested a press release be published in relation to the appointment of a new Town Centre Manager for Middleton.
- Concern was raised regarding the use of micro-asphalt to repair potholes and resurface roads. In response, it was explained that pothole repairs were carried out in accordance with the Council's adopted policy, and any variation to practice would need to be agreed by the Council. The Assistant Director, Place encouraged councillors to report details of any particular areas of concern.
- In response to a question regarding the Council's Planning Enforcement Team, the Head of Planning Services explained there were currently two permanent officers and two agency officers in post. The department had been unable to fill the two agency posts due to the lack of applicants. Work was underway to ensure the service remained sustainable and a backlog of enforcement cases did not build up.
- The Committee commended the Council's work to deliver the inclusive play parks project across the Borough. It was asked if the park in Nixon Street, Rochdale would be designed to be inclusive for all children. The Assistant Director, Place agreed to circulate further details to the Committee.
- It was noted there was currently a vacancy on the Rochdale Development Agency Board, and it was suggested the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing be appointed to the post.
- Concerns were raised in relation to Rochdale Boroughwide Housing environmental management, including lawn mowing, litter picking, and maintenance of open spaces. It was requested the relevant Director be asked to attend a future scrutiny committee meeting.
- It was noted that work with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority to prepare an Early Evening Economy Strategy was underway and due to be completed by the end of July 2024. The Chair requested that a copy of the Strategy be circulated to the Committee.
- Members commended proposals to reduce digital inequalities by providing free broadband to deprived neighbourhoods. It was reported that 4000 households were currently accessing free WiFi and the Council was awaiting confirmation from Rochdale Boroughwide Housing regarding a commitment to support with installation to expand the network and roll out the offer to other areas across the Borough.

- In relation to the development and implement of a Fly Tipping Strategy – it was reported that the first phase of the Strategy had been concluded following extensive work with a member working group. The Council was currently implementing recommendations, including a restructure to form an ‘Environmental Quality Team’. It was explained that a report would be submitted to Cabinet in September 2024.
- Additional information was sought regarding the next steps and implications of the Places for Everyone plan. The Head of Planning Services advised that an all Member briefing would be arranged in the forthcoming months.
- In relation to the work underway with key strategic housing partners to increase the delivery of affordable homes across the Borough – it was queried what the term ‘affordable’ meant. The Assistant Director, Place agreed to circulate an information briefing note to the Committee explaining the ‘affordable homes’ and ‘affordable rent’ categories and criteria.

**Resolved –**

1. That the Economy and Place Directorate Plan 2024-25: Quarter 1 Performance Update be noted.
2. That the Assistant Director, Place be requested to circulate to the Committee the following:
  - A briefing note explaining affordable homes and affordable rent categories and criteria.
  - Information regarding the design of the play park in Nixon Street, Rochdale.
  - A copy of the Early Evening Economy Strategy.
3. That the Head of Planning Services be requested to circulate to the Committee an update in relation to the Warwick Mill, Middleton development.
4. That the Senior Governance and Committee Officer be requested to invite the Rochdale Boroughwide Housing Director responsible for environmental management to a future Committee meeting.

**26 DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25**

**Resolved** – That the Senior Governance and Committee Officer, in consultation with the Chair be requested to incorporate the following items into the Communities, Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme:

- Planning enforcement update
- Public Health and Planning - hot food takeaway premises, to include details regarding Council powers and public health implications.
- Rochdale Town Hall Business Plan

- Places for Everyone, including timescales and consultation with councillors.
- Rochdale Boroughwide Housing, director responsible for Environmental Management to be invited to attend a Committee meeting.
- Homelessness and Mental Health Report
- Early Evening Economy Strategy
- Community Safety Update, to include an update in relation to the Township Community Safety Lead Officer and the Safer Communities Partnership.

## **27 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**Resolved** - That the press and public be excluded from the remaining part of the meeting pursuant to Section 100(A)4 of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that discussions may involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the provisions of Part 1 of Schedule 12A paragraph three to the Local Government Act 1972 and public interest would not be served in publishing the information.

## **28 ROCHDALE TOWN HALL: FIRST QUARTER OVERVIEW AFTER RE-OPENING**

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Economy and Place / Cabinet Member for Communities and Cooperation that provided an update relating to operations of Rochdale Town Hall since the re-opening in March 2024.

The Chair thanked officers for the report and then opened the meeting to comments and questions from Members.

During the discussion the following points were raised:

- Clarification was sought regarding the value of volunteer in-kind contributions and how this was calculated. In response, it was explained that a skilled volunteer daily rate was valued at £150 per day and it was necessary to calculate and submit details of volunteer contributions to The National Lottery.
- It was reported that the Town Hall restaurant was due to open in September 2024. The newly appointed chef had been involved in the design and procurement of the kitchen facilities. It was explained that there had been challenges in relation to recruitment to specialist restaurant roles.
- The importance of ensuring all residents were represented in the Town Hall was highlighted.

**Resolved –**

1. That the Rochdale Town Hall: First Quarter Overview after Re-Opening report be noted.

2. That a copy of the Rochdale Town Hall Business Plan be circulated to the Communities, Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
3. That details in relation to the Town Hall's financial model (expenditure, (including maintenance costs) income and volunteer hours) be circulated to the Communities, Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee.