

ROCHDALE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING Wednesday, 13th March 2019

PRESENT: Councillor Sultan Ali (in the Chair); Councillors Ali Ahmed, Iftikhar Ahmed, Shakil Ahmed, Daalat Ali, Biant, Farnell, Gartside, Heakin, Holly, Hornby, Meredith, O'Neill, Rashid, Sheerin, Sullivan, Wazir, Winkler and Zaheer.

OFFICERS: V. White, I. Trickett (Neighbourhoods Directorate), F. Davies (Children's Directorate) and P. Thompson (Resources Directorate).

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Inspector D. Callaghan (Greater Manchester Police),
C. Murphy (Metro Moneywise Credit Union) and three members of the public.

APOLOGIES

44 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brett, Brosnan, Cocks, Howard, Nickson, Rana, Angela Smith and Zaman.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

45 There were no declarations of interest.

GREATER MANCHESTER POLICE - UPDATE

46 Inspector Darren Callaghan (Greater Manchester Police (GMP)) updated the Township Committee on activities and initiatives that were undertaken by GMP in the Rochdale Township.

- a. Operation Sceptre – an operation to target and counter 'knife crime'. This was an initiative that was taking place across the whole of GMP's footprint. Members noted Inspector Callaghan's comments that Rochdale had the second lowest level of knife crime of the 10 Greater Manchester authorities (after Bury). GMP were involved in a wide ranging campaign in this regard that included conveying messages via social media outlets and visits to schools and colleges.
- b. Operation Dynamo – an initiative to counter a recent 'spike' in the theft of motor vehicles and the theft of property from motor vehicles.
- c. Operation Bridger – an operation to counter threats to local politicians and community leaders in the Borough
- d. Operation Dragster – an initiative to counter the illegal use of 'off-road' vehicles including the use of drones. This initiative had resulted in the seizure of three vehicles.
- e. Operation Considerate – an initiative to clamp down on illegal and dangerous driving practices. This exercise was undertaken at different locations in Rochdale and resulted in action being taken against drivers for offences such as using mobile phones whilst driving, drivers and front seat passengers not wearing seatbelts and drivers not having valid road tax or insurance for their vehicles

- f. Operation Bohemia – an initiative to counter youth anti-social behaviour in and around Rochdale’s town centre area
- g. GMP were working closely with Rochdale Town Centre management Company to look at ways of making the town centre area safer for all users and to encourage the greater patronage of families.

Further to the GMP presentation at the Committee’s last meeting, on 23rd January 2019, Inspector Callaghan reported upon improvements to the 101 telephone service and he had circulated to Members of the Committee, written details of their management structure in the Rochdale Township area, including the names of the appropriate senior officers and the areas in which GMP teams operate.

Resolved;

That the Greater Manchester Police update be noted and welcomed.

METRO MONEYWISE CREDIT UNION

47 The Committee received a presentation from a representative of Metro Moneywise, Ms. C. Murphy, on Metro Moneywise including its association with Rochdale Borough Council, outlining its benefits and key services.

A Member suggested that the Council investigate the possibility of the Council working together with Metro Moneywise Credit Union to develop a borough-wide Credit Union.

Decided:

The work of the Metro Moneywise Credit Union be commended by the Committee and the presentation be noted and welcomed.

OPEN FORUM

48 There were no issues raised in the Committee’s Open Forum session.

MINUTES

49 Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting of Rochdale Township Committee held 23rd January 2019 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

ROCHDALE TOWNSHIP ACTION AND RESOURCES SUB-COMMITTEE

50 Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting of Rochdale Township Action and Resources Sub-Committee held 14th February 2019, be noted.

ROCHDALE NEW ALLOTMENTS PROVISION

51 The Township Committee considered a report of the Director of Neighbourhoods which advised that across the Borough there were currently 524 allotment plots which was not considered to be not enough to meet current demand. As at 25th February 2019 there were 985 people on the waiting list for an allotment in the Borough, more than quadruple the figure in 2015. Allotment plots were presently allocated at the rate of 30 plots per year through natural turnover and, on average, the Council received 160 new

applications for allotments year on year. The waiting time had therefore increased significantly from seven years in 2015 years ago to a potential 33 years if the demand was to remain at its present level.

The Council's Environmental Management Service had been tasked with creating 100 new plots a year, every year, for the next five years. This had been approved by the Cabinet with provisionally allocated Capital funding to enable delivery. Each Township had been asked to identify viable sites within their boundaries. The Environmental Management Service had been working with the Council's Planning and Estates services to create a list of potential sites.

The Committee were being asked to approve that formal consultation be held regarding the potential use of the following sites for new allotment provision:

- a. Thrum Hall open space off Shawclough Way
- b. Cherrington Drive, Castleton
- c. Hutchinson Road, Norden
- d. Ings Lane, Spotland
- e. Oldham Road/Craiglands, near Kirkholt

A Member expressed his reservations regarding the proposals to locate allotments at Oldham Road, as this was a major 'Gateway' entrance to the Borough. Instead he suggested that officers in the Environmental Management Service liaise with Rochdale Boroughwide Housing with a view to finding suitable locations on some of the open space land in the Kirkholt area. The Craiglands location was therefore removed from the list of potential sites.

The Chair permitted Mr N. Morrell to address the Committee in relation to proposals, detailed in the report, to locate allotment plots at Hutchinson Road, Norden.

Alternatives considered:

A variety of sites across the Township had already been considered and declined at the shortlisting stage by officers for technical reasons. In addition Members were invited to nominate additional sites for technical testing to see if they were viable options.

Resolved:

1. The Committee approves that the following sites be approved, for consultative purposes, as potential sites for allocation for new allotment provision in Rochdale Township: Thrum Hall open space off Shawclough Way, Cherrington Drive, Castleton, Hutchinson Road, Norden and Ings Lane, Spotland.
2. Members of the Committee be requested to liaise with appropriate officers in the Council's Environmental Management Service regarding areas for potential use as allotment sites, in their Wards.

Reasons for the decision:

The recommendations in the report would enable the Council to work towards meeting recommendations of Government standards on how many allotment plots should be provided and would also enable the Council's Environmental Management Service to make progress towards its target of achieving an additional 500 allotment plots across the Borough.

Eligible for call-in: Yes

THE NEED FOR EXTRA PRIMARY SCHOOL PLACES 2019 - 2023

52 The Township Committee was consulted on a report of the Director of Children's Services which advised that there was a need to keep under review the need for extra class places in each of the Borough's Townships. The purpose of the report was to set out proposals to address the need for extra Reception Year places. Pupil place planning sought to ensure that the Townships were kept aware of school spaces and pupil numbers within their area and to aid local government decision making.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

Reasons for the recommendations:

The Council has a statutory duty to provide education and school places to all school aged children living in the borough and consequently has a duty to plan adequately for predicted pupil numbers.

Eligible for Call-in: No

THE NEED FOR EXTRA YEAR 7 SCHOOL PLACES 2019-2028

53 The Township Committee were consulted on a report of the Director of Children's Services which outlined strategies for managing the predicted shortfall in year 7 places for the intake years of 2019 and 2020. Appropriate staff in Children's Services were working to aid the Department for Education and any successful academy to open a new school in the Borough for September 2021 for future places that are needed.

The Council's Schools Organisation and Planning Team were currently in discussions with schools about any additional places offered for September 2019. It was anticipated that the numbers of additional places would change from those presented in the submitted report for 'own admission' authority schools. The government had made an announcement to say they were going to fund all special school applications that "meet the criteria". Rochdale Council has submitted an expression of interest to have a new secondary special school specializing in Autism and Communications special needs. The Committee was asked to note the plans for extra capacity for September 2020.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

Reasons for the recommendation;

Since 2005 the number of pupils in schools has been rising steadily. Extra capacity has been created in both the Primary and Secondary school estates.

11 of the 12 secondary schools in the Borough have had building expansions or taken numbers over their Pupil Admission Number. Two schools are currently undergoing building works but have already raised their Published Admission Number to take extra children. No further secondary school expansions are in the pipeline and two new schools are required to be built in the Borough; one in the north Pennines and one in Middleton.

Eligible for Call-in: No

ROCHDALE GRASS VERGE MANAGEMENT

54 The Township Committee considered a report of the Director of Neighbourhoods which examined proposals for cutting grass verges across the Township. The proposals outlined in the report were intended to: deliver cost savings, develop a suitable habitat for wildlife; improve the appearance of the Township; minimise the need to mow; enable the trialling of new models for how verges are to be maintained; deliver floral verges in the summer months; and to retain a neat finish in the winter months after flowers have faded. The appendix to the report detailed a series of locations across the Borough where the proposed grass cutting could occur.

As part of the process to implement the programme, the Director of Neighbourhoods reported upon the intended use of a growth retardant chemical to slow the rate of grass growth and therefore reduce the frequency of mowing. This would mainly be used on verges where Traffic Management Orders were required. Members expressed their concern at the proposed use of the growth retardant chemicals.

Alternatives considered:

To cease mowing entirely: this option not to be pursued except for rural/informal areas where that method will not look out of place.

Resolved:

1. The Township Committee approves the shortlist of sites detailed in the appendix to the report provided in the attached document, for the grass verge management scheme, on the condition that the growth retardant chemicals are not used.

Reasons for the decision:

To enable the Council's Environmental Management Services to improve the quality of grass verges in terms of floral features, wildlife habitat value and to reduce pollution whilst delivering budget savings.

Eligible for Call-in: Yes