

Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel

7 January 2020

Commenced: 6.00pm

Terminated: 7.35pm

Present: Councillors Glover (Chair), Mills (Deputy Chair), Billington, Bowden, Choksi, Chadwick, J Fitzpatrick, P Fitzpatrick, A Holland, Hollinshead, Pearce, Robinson, Sharif, Sweeton.

Apologies for absence: Councillors Alam, Bowerman, Lewis, Naylor.

30. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel held on 5 November 2019 were approved as a correct record subsequent to the addition below.

- Members to receive information and sources used to inform data and statistics quoted within findings and outcomes from the Peer Review of Healthy Spaces.

31. HIGHWAYS AND FLOOD PREVENTION

The Panel welcomed Lee Holland, Head of Engineering Services, to provide an update on winter pressures associated with flood prevention and highway maintenance.

Mr Holland provided a summary of legislative requirements when dealing with flood risk. A major change in 2010 resulted in a greater level of responsibility for local authorities. Prior to this, the Environment Agency held responsibility for all incidents relating to main rivers and watercourses, which changed to main rivers only. Designated as the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), the Council has responsibility for flood sources which include:

- Ordinary watercourse
- Highway surface water (with Highway Authority)
- Surface water from other sources (with Highway Authority)
- Groundwater flooding

Further detail was provided on the roles and responsibilities for land owners (Riparian Ownership), with examples provided on the Council's work with residents and landowners across a number of areas. It was reported that over 200 inlet structures have been identified and added to the asset register. Of these, the Council maintain a number that are considered critical to flood risk. Grants and investment has enabled a number of crucial inlet structures to be repaired and replaced where necessary. This has improved functionality and allows urgent and routine inspections to be undertaken in a safe and controlled environment.

A breakdown of activity was provided on gully cleansing. This included information on the frequency that cleansing is carried out in critical locations and known hotspots. Mr Holland reported that while the service had previously reduced to only one machine, past feedback from Scrutiny had contributed to a recent decision to increase this to two machines. This supports a system with greater capacity to deal with both reactive and routine works.

The Panel heard that the Council has a duty to maintain the highway, so far as is reasonably practicable, to ensure safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow and ice. The weather forecast from Met Desk is monitor 24/7 from November to April, with local intelligence also drawn from two weather stations. All information and data allows for effective decision making on when to spread salt on the highway network.

The service has experienced and fully trained winter gritting officers, with a range of vehicles to accommodate the variety of roads and footpaths. The winter maintenance schedule and gritting network has been reviewed to take account of periods where cold weather may be expected and for route optimisation to maximise the use of available resources.

The Panel asked how recent flood prevention work has helped to mitigate flooding and the associated risks. Mr Holland advised members that improvement work completed on critical infrastructure was much needed and provides a greater level of assurance prior to a period of expected rainfall. It is important to note that it remains very difficult to prevent all episodes of flooding should the borough experience an unprecedented level of rainfall.

The Panel asked about winter grit bins located across the borough and weather salt is replenished during the winter months. Mr Holland advised that there are approximately 360 grit bins located across the borough in historic locations. All bins are filled at the beginning of the winter period and there is often a greater need to ensure salt is used on the highway, for which all residents can benefit. A grit bin request will be approved only where a criteria is met, namely height above sea level and road category.

Resolved: That Mr Holland be thanked for attending the meeting.

32. RESPONSE TO GREATER MANCHESTER BUS CONSULTATION

Panel members reviewed a draft response letter to the Greater Manchester consultation, Doing Buses Differently, to be submitted by 8 January 2020. The Panel approved all content, with no amendments prior to submission.

Resolved: The Chair to submit the consultation response on behalf of the Panel.

33. GREATER MANCHESTER SCRUTINY

The Chair is a member of the Greater Manchester Housing, Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The most recent meeting was held in November 2019, with the following topics discussed:

- Greater Manchester Implementation Plan
- Town Centre Strategy
- A Bed Every Night / Housing First
- GM electric vehicle charging tariff proposal

The Chair reaffirmed that the Scrutiny Update emails will continue to include a link to all public papers for the Greater Manchester Combined Authority Scrutiny Committees.

34. CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair reported that the final report and Executive Response for the review of Improving Quality and Standards in the Private Rented Sector was presented at the Overview Panel meeting on 18 November 2019. The working group will meet again on 13 January 2020 to receive a progress update on improvement proposals and timescales.

The working group will remain in place to work in partnership, and as a critical friend to the Executive during future development and consultation stages.

Resolved: Details and outcomes from working group meetings to be routinely reported to the Scrutiny Panel.

35. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note that the next meeting of the Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel will take place on Tuesday 10 March 2020.

36. URGENT ITEMS

The Chair reported that there were no urgent items for consideration at this meeting.

CHAIR