

**Place Select Committee**  
**Overview Meeting 2022**  
**21 February 2022**  
**Community Services and Transport**

**Context**

Members are reminded of the Council's Vision that supports decision-making:

A place where people are healthy, safe and protected from harm

- This means the Borough will be a place where:
  - People live in cohesive and safe communities
  - People are supported and protected from harm
  - People live healthy lives

A place that is clean, vibrant and attractive

- This means we will enjoy:
  - Great places to live and visit
  - Clean and green spaces
  - Rich cultural experiences

A place with a thriving economy where everyone has opportunities to succeed

- This means that the Borough will have:
  - A growing economy
  - Improved education and skills development
  - Job creation and increased employment

The Council plays its part in making sure this is achieved by being a Council that is ambitious, effective and proud to serve.

- This means that we will make sure that we provide:
  - Financial sustainability and value for money
  - Dedicated and resourceful employees
  - Strong leadership and governance

**Performance Reporting**

Performance across the Council Plan was reported on a six-monthly basis to Executive Scrutiny Committee. Please see the link:

<http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/users/public/admin/kab71.pl?cmte=SCR>

## **COMMUNITY SERVICES AND TRANSPORT**

### **Director – Jamie McCann**

Relevant services include:

- Catering and Cleaning
- Community Services (Care For Your Area)
- Construction and Facility Services
- Highways, Transport and Design Services

## **COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2024**

The Council Plan sets out the aims and objectives for all services and is refreshed on an annual basis.

The key 2021-2022 priorities for Community Services and Transport are attached at Appendix 1.

## **EMERGING ISSUES**

The last 12 months have provided a range of challenges as a consequence of the pandemic, resulting in a range of modifications to the way in which services have been delivered whilst also gearing up to deliver new services which have included PPE delivery, providing logistical support for our testing sites and delivering essential catering services via the hub as well as a huge number of food parcels to those who receive free school meals. The commitment, dedication and innovation of our staff has shone through which has resulted in a significant number of service compliments across the various services areas from our residents.

Energy costs continue to spiral upwards with periodic updates on cost of all fuels being delivered by our energy purchase partners in the region NEPO. This has increased across the council in recent months and currently has risen in cost by £750,000 for the next financial year. This has the potential to increase further.

Service delivery is influenced by a range of internal and external factors that develop over time. Emerging challenges and opportunities are summarised as follows:

### **Waste Strategy Consultations**

The 2018 Resources and Waste Strategy for England has highlighted a number of potential changes which are currently being consulted on with an indicative implementation date of 2025-2025. This includes the following:

- Waste Collection Authorities to provide a separate food waste collection to household properties at least once a week.
- Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) introduction - A system where you pay an upfront deposit on plastic drinks bottles; you must return the container to redeem the deposit.
- Extended Producer Responsibility – A system where producers pay for the full costs of dealing with the waste they produce
- Green Waste Collections – A review of whether LA's should be charging for separate collection services.

The above changes have the potential to have large-scale effects on LA waste collection models and waste composition. A key priority will be to understand the finer detail of the final proposals and the associated operational and financial impact that these changes will have. A key driver is a standardised food waste collection service, therefore we have already began looking at food waste disposal outlets at a regional level with our regional neighbours.

A Strategic Outline Business Case for the future treatment of an estimated 96,000tpa of separately collected food waste generated from across the North-East region by the North East 12 Councils has been highlighted in an Outline Business Case. Once finalised, this will be fed through via the usual corporate and political process.

The waste consultation also seeks views on whether local authorities should issue charges for the collection of green waste although the government have confirmed that further consideration of costs and benefits would need to be obtained prior to any final policy decision. However, they have confirmed that LA's who currently issue a charge to deliver the service would have costs covered in order to meet the statutory duty in line with the new burdens guidance.

Finally, the forthcoming Resources and Waste Strategy for England 2018 looks to legislate (currently out for consultation) for glass, metal, plastic, paper and card, food and garden waste to be collected for recycling from households. The consultation states that these recyclable waste streams must be collected by collectors of household waste. The preferred method of recycling collection remains separated at the kerb (as in Stockton Borough). However those that currently co-mingle recyclables are able to do so for Technically practicable, Economically practicable or No significant environmental benefit (TEEP) reasons.

### **Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) post September 2023 onwards**

Tender documents for a contract for the design, build, management & operation of a Household Waste Recycling Facility for the residents of both Stockton on Tees & Middlesbrough Borough Councils went live on the NEPO portal in December 2021. This site will be located in the Haverton Hill area due to be easily accessible for both boroughs which is achieved through the proximity to the A19 and A66. The facility would need to be capable of processing 25,000-30,000 tonnes of waste per annum with a minimum recycling rate of 75%.

Tenders are due in on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2022, with evaluations taking place April and May, contract award date of 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2022 and a service commencement date of 1<sup>st</sup> September 2023.

### **Energy From Waste Plant (EFW)**

Our current Waste Disposal contract will cease in April 2026. Stockton, alongside the other Tees Valley Authorities, are currently involved in the procurement of an EFW to provide disposal capacity for 450,000 tonnes of waste per annum. Three bidders have submitted tenders for this contract which are Viridor, Suez and FCC. It is anticipated that a preferred bidder will be identified by 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022 and that we will enter into a project agreement with the contractor by 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

The EFW site will be located at the South Tees Development site in Redcar. The location of this site will mean that SBC must also look at a suitable Waste Transfer arrangements to ensure efficient movement of waste to this site; this will form one of our key priorities in the year ahead.

## **PRIORITIES FOR THE YEAR AHEAD**

### **Continue programme of road and pavement maintenance and repairs**

The current cost to replace Stockton's highway asset would be in excess of £1.7bn making it the most valuable asset the Council is responsible for. The Council receives approximately half the budget it needs to keep our assets (carriageways, footways, streetlights, bridges etc.) at a steady state. The highway asset is vital for the local economy and the residents' quality of life. Keeping Stockton moving is one of our key priorities as good quality highway infrastructure is essential for Stockton's economic prospects and resident's quality of life. Along with carrying out the delivery of our annual programme of road and pavement maintenance and repairs priority will be given to implementing the seven recommendations that have been approved by the Councils Cabinet following the recent scrutiny review into Highways Asset Management (inc. Potholes & Flooding).

### **Deliver the major transport-related projects for Stockton**

The Councils Highways, Transport and Design team will continue to support the delivery of a series of major transport-related projects such as Portrack Relief Road, Billingham & Eaglescliffe Station improvements, Elton Interchange, and improvements along the A689 corridor. The successful delivery of these projects will help continue to grow the economy by facilitating development and creating jobs, improving accessibility to essential services and help tackle climate change by reducing congestion and encouraging the use of sustainable transport.

Support the Combined Authority and Bus Operators in delivering the agreed outcomes and objectives set out in the Tees Valley Enhanced Bus Partnership Plan and Scheme

Since the first national lockdown in March 2020, the government has provided financial support to the bus sector to ensure the continued provision of services despite significantly reduced passenger numbers. This recovery funding was intended to support the bus sector return to financial sustainability and is due to come to an end in March 2022. The Government published Bus Back Better a national bus strategy for England. The strategy sets out the long-term vision and opportunity to deliver better bus services for passengers across England. In the strategy the Government set out that for operators and transport authorities to be eligible for future funding to support bus provision they must submit a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and implement an Enhanced Partnership (EP). The BSIP sets out the local vision for delivering a step-change in bus services & the EP is the mechanism for bus operators and transport authorities to work together to deliver the vision. The Tees Valley BSIP was submitted to Government in October 2021. The Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA), the five local authorities and the bus operators are planning to enter in to an EP later this year. The Council will work with the TVCA and Bus Operators in delivering the agreed outcomes and objectives as set out in the Tees Valley BSIP as part of the EP scheme.

### **Cemeteries**

Additional one-off resources were approved to allow for additional improvements to drainage across all sites which builds upon the work completed in recent months at Thornaby Cemetery.

Many of our sites were constructed many years ago and had minimal or no drainage which has been compounded by a gradual increase in the annual rainfall level in recent years, resulting in an increase in standing water. Clearly, the site of graves with standing water is both very distressing for the bereaved and also causes significant operational problems for

our cemeteries staff who need to dig graves for burials although they are constantly fighting the elements, especially over the winter months. Therefore, there is a need for ongoing improvements in our cemeteries.

Technical drainage, land composition and elevation surveys will be conducted in the coming months which will inform a range of additional works which will be completed over the coming year; we will also take the opportunity to improve existing paths as well as providing suitable walking areas between grave rows wherever possible.

As Members will be aware, the need for additional burial space was a topic discussed at a previous Place Committee review and good progress is being made in the search for a new site which will serve the Central / Western Stockton area and it is expected that a shortlist of potential areas will be available in the near future with the associated financial breakdown for delivery.

As FM and Construction Services continue to move forward to a more commissioning role there is significant work being delivered across the department to establish strong, robust Frameworks which allow a flexible approach to delivering the Councils Asset Management strategy. The Framework allows flexibility in responding to demand whilst having some certainty on cost.

There are a number of energy efficient schemes being implemented which will reduce energy use and help manage cost moving forward. These include the use of EV where possible in the Fleet. In addition to a significant PV Solar Panel project being planned for the Cowpen Depot roof, a number of small schemes are being delivered which will replace old building infrastructure (i.e. Boilers/Light Fittings/Windows) and introduce better outcomes with lower energy use. An example is a replacement agreed program for large internal areas to have improved, energy efficient lighting installed which will improve the working spaces and make significant energy savings.

## **Catering Services**

Our current SLA`s and Academy contracts and built on strong robust relationships with bespoke menus across the borough as, due to the diversity of our users, we believe one size does not fit all. We work to develop a whole school approach, enhancing staff training and skills. working with pupil focus groups and supporting families with specific dietary requirements.

In special school schools and care catering we have expanded training in the provision of our customers with Dysphagia and require pureed meals to make this a much more inviting meal experience .

Other areas of success are as follows:

- Bespoke menus to meet individual school need and dietary requirements
- Introduced wristband ordering system so pupil pre order meals to avoid end of queue dissatisfaction and significantly reduce waste
- Deliver the Holiday feeding programme
- Work with apprentices and trainees towards succession planning
- Reduce plastics in schools to more environmentally friendly and recycled packaging i.e. changing plastic water bottles to recyclable cartons.

We are currently introducing a new online payment and ordering system, which is a huge advantage to help retain business. It also enables parents to pre order and pay for meals in advance and particularly with pupil with specific allergies or dietary needs.

Our catering service continues to encourage the use of our services to Schools and Academies who are clearly free to make their own choices for catering provision but the importance of a high quality offer, in full compliance to national food standards cannot be under-estimated when considering both the educational benefits brought about by a balanced, healthy meal during the school day in terms of improved concentration levels as well as the socio-economic considerations within the borough where the school meal could be the only healthy meal the child receives that day with many families suffering from food poverty. There has been a recent announcement that the UK Government will promote accountability and transparency of school food arrangements by encouraging schools to complete a statement on their school websites, which sets out their whole school approach to food. The UK Government's intention is that this will become mandatory when schools can do this effectively.

## **CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

### **Support the delivery of the sustainable transport schemes contained within the TVCA's City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement programme for Stockton**

The Government's City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) provides the main transport funding for sustainable transport measures in the Tees Valley for the next five years 2022-27. It aims to create a more consolidated and devolved model of transport funding and deliver significant improvements for users. Just as London's capacity and funding was built up over several successive multi-year financial settlements, it is intended, subject to future spending reviews and the success of this programme, that this could be the first of a series of five-year transport settlements for the city regions. As part of the last Comprehensive Spending Review it was announced that the TVCA will receive £310m from the fund for the delivery of sustainable transport schemes over the next five years. The primary objective of the schemes will be to encourage the use of sustainable forms of transport such as rail, bus, walking and cycling.

### **Understand and respond to the implications of changes in travel patterns as a result of the Covid pandemic**

The Covid pandemic has changed the way people live their lives and we will need to understand the longer-term change in peoples travel behaviours because of the pandemic and adapt our transport services accordingly.

### **Climate Change**

Transport is one of the largest emitting sectors of greenhouse gases in the UK. Climate Change is also predicted to increase the amount of adverse weather events which put additional strain on our services and assets both Highways & Buildings. Adverse weather will depreciate them quicker requiring further maintenance and an increase demand on our services with more flooding and Winter Service demands. Building on the work already done to date such as encouraging more sustainable forms of transport, using environmentally friendly materials in our roads and buildings projects, working with the TVCA on the roll out of more electric vehicle charging points the Highways, Transport and Design Services will continue to play an important role in mitigating and responding to the effects of Climate Change and delivering the outcomes in the Councils forthcoming Environmental Sustainability & Carbon Reduction Strategy.

The Environment Act will provide an opportunity to review the way in which we deliver services which, in some cases, will be linked to other Government consultations, such as the Waste Strategy. We are awaiting further guidance following the conclusion of the consultation period which will allow us to consider associated operational and service delivery impacts.

### **Fleet Management**

A similar consideration to those previously highlighted is the national transition away from fossil fuel vehicles towards more environmentally friendly options.

Whilst the infrastructure is improving in some respects, the Council has nearly 400 vehicles within our fleet and the cost differential is significant with some electric vehicles costing double the cost of a diesel variant e.g. the Electra Refuse Collection Vehicle. This clearly has an impact upon the Council's longer term financial planning but it also creates additional challenges in terms of the charging infrastructure at our existing sites; for example, Cowpen Depot is the main base of operations for Refuse and Recycling Services yet the age of the site and infrastructure does not lend itself to a large increase in additional EV points. A future consideration therefore is to review where we operate from and this is a piece of work which will be considered corporately by the corporate asset management group; this will also include a review of the alternative fuel variants that would be considered as electric is one option although, as the market progress, other options including hydrogen and other variants may be a consideration.

Finally, the competitive labour market is challenging as our trained staff including fitters and HGV drivers are in high demand and a valuable commodity within both public and private sectors. This is not unique to Stockton Borough Council or indeed Community Services and Transport but its worthy of note.

### **POTENTIAL AREAS FOR IN-DEPTH REVIEW**

Members are reminded that topics are being sought for the Scrutiny Work Programme 2022-2023. Using the information provided as part of the performance updates and this Overview meeting, the Committee is invited to identify potential topics for review within this theme.

Proposed topic suggestion to be considered at Executive Scrutiny Committee on 22 March 2022.

- One the priorities set out in this report for next year is to support the Combined Authority and Bus Operators in delivering the agreed outcomes and objectives set out in the Tees Valley Enhanced Bus Partnership Plan and Scheme. It is suggested that a review into the current provision of bus services in Stockton and potential future needs would help inform the work of the Enhanced Partnership giving a clear view of the priority areas for improvement over the coming years.
- Whilst the Council does have a specific team in place for the inspection and maintenance of our tree assets, we have a small team of staff responsible for a significant number of assets and the recent winter storms, specifically Storm Arwen, have caused significant pressure on a finite resource which has led to significant time taken to deal with the initial emergency call outs as well as the backlog in other programmed works. Potentially a review of tree asset management would be interest to Members to ensure that resources are being directed effectively and Members are given the opportunity to understand elements of national best practice and legislation and how this informs current service delivery.

## **APPENDIX 1: COUNCIL PLAN – KEY PRIORITIES 2022-2023 (COMMUNITY SERVICES AND TRANSPORT)**

Making the borough a place that is clean, vibrant and attractive means creating:

- Great places to live and visit
- Clean and green spaces
- Rich cultural experiences

We have identified these key priorities for 2022-23 to help us achieve this vision. This year we will:

- Work in partnership with the five Tees Valley local authorities, Durham and Newcastle to procure new waste management arrangements.
- Review Street Cleansing service and re-align and re-distribute resources in line with operational need
- Contribute to the corporate objectives in relation to spatial planning and the use of open space across the borough, including working with the new 'Places' team within Events, Leisure and Culture Directorate to understand and deliver out on the requirements of the Environment Act.
- Continue to work with Procurement and Middlesbrough Borough Council to deliver a new Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC).
- Respond to the outcomes of the Waste Strategy for England consultation, including option appraisal for alternative service delivery as a result of mandated changes.
- Contribute to Buildings and Assets Strategy including the rationalisation of buildings and transfer of functions

Making the borough a place with a thriving economy where everyone has opportunities to succeed means creating:

- A growing economy
- Improved education and skills development
- Job creation and increased employment

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- Continue our programme of road and pavement maintenance and repairs
- Support the Combined Authority and Bus Operators in delivering the agreed outcomes and objectives set out in the Tees Valley Enhanced Bus Partnership Plan and Scheme
- Deliver the major transport-related projects at the Portrack Relief Road, Billingham and Eaglescliffe Station improvements, Elton Interchange, and improvements along the A689 corridor
- Understand and respond to the implications of changes in travel patterns as a result of the Covid pandemic



Good health, well-being and opportunities for everyone

- Identify and deliver a new allergens labelling system and training package following the U.K food amendment legislation (Natasha's Law) which comes into effect October 2021
- Deliver the procured Smart Catering system into some maintained schools. A customer focused programme eliminating cash, enabling allergen awareness and a pre order menu system via an App.