

Present: Councillor J. Hussain (Chair)
Councillors Kouser, McLaren, Moores, Sharp, Shuttleworth and
Wilkinson

Also in Attendance:
Councillor Josh Charters - Deputy Cabinet Member for Bee
Network Delivery
Paul Clifford – Director of Economy
Nasir Dad – Director of Environment
Jon Bloor – Assistant Director (Skills and Employment)
Peter Richards – Assistant Director (Planning, Transport and
Housing Delivery)
Eleanor Sykes – Strategic Transportation Team Leader
Gail Stott – Performance Improvement Lead
Alex Glenny – Performance Improvement Advisor
Peter Thompson – Constitutional Services

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ghafoor,
Murphy and Williamson.

2 **URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of urgent business received.

3 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received.

4 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions for this meeting of the Scrutiny
Board to consider.

5 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS PLACE, ECONOMIC GROWTH
AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY BOARD MEETING**

Resolved:
That the minutes of the meeting of the Place, Economic Growth
and Environment Scrutiny Board, held on 3rd October 2024, be
approved, as a correct record.

6 **BARRIERS TO WORK**

The Scrutiny Board received a detailed presentation from the
Assistant Director (Employment and Skills) which examined
different approaches to work, with the overall aim of increasing
employment and employment opportunities across the Borough
of Oldham.

Members were informed that Oldham has the highest
unemployment rate in Greater Manchester (all age and youth
related). Youth unemployment remains steady but there was a
marked increase in the all-age group during 2024. A significant
external factor in this regard was the impact of Covid-19 and
Universal Credit (UC) Conditionality.

There had been an initial increase in UC claimants due to the impact of Covid-19 and due to the associated economic fallout. There had been a quick recovery but UC claimant levels were still above the pre-pandemic levels. There were also secondary increases that were due to Universal Credit Claimant conditional changes. In this regard, across Greater Manchester UC Claimants with no work conditionality had increased from 40,000 in 2020 to presently nearly 160,000. This cohort had a range of issues which meant that they were not mandated to find work (usually due to health/disability reasons).

The Scrutiny Board was advised of barriers to employment and employment opportunities, including the following:

- Social mobility – movement in/out of Oldham – which was, mainly, a legacy impact of short-term tenancies from 2008.
- Rights to work, including language barriers.
- Lack of available good employment opportunities – jobs and apprenticeships
- Poor physical health
- Disabilities/SEND
- Low mood/mental health/lack of confidence
- Low skills levels
- Economic drivers (concerns regarding transition from benefits, cost of childcare etc.)
- Sustainable employment opportunities (seasonal work)
- Caring responsibilities
- Poor networks – not knowing where to find jobs – no longer advertised in local papers.
- Choice
- New arrivals UK – rules about who can access public funds.

In a bid to counter some of the barriers the Council was in the process of developing an Employment and Skills Strategy. This strategy would look to build on outstanding education and skills outcomes; to support young people's progression into employment – linked to the Government's 'Youth Guarantee' scheme. The Strategy would also develop 'Skills Mapping' which would link curriculum choices to local growth plans and to counter economic inactivity, with schemes that support residents to stay and/or return to the workplace. Employers' also had roles to play in the future curriculum development via Business Engagement which entailed supporting local businesses to develop initiatives which would benefit local people, including the need to connect residents to job vacancies. A prime example being the Atom Valley scheme, which, in the long-term would hopefully generate upwards of 20,000 jobs as well as the 'Green New Deal' and plans for the Cyber/Digital growth sectors.

The role of the Council in the plan would be central to its ultimate success. As an employer, the Council would strive to provide high quality employment opportunities to the Borough's residents across a wide skill set. Through business development support initiatives, it would help to create new jobs and to offer apprenticeship opportunities for Care Leavers. It would also develop T-Level Work Placement Opportunities

In terms of its role as a change maker in the community, the Council had overseen the creation of private sector jobs

including the Egyptian Rooms with 42 vacancies for residents of Oldham. The Council had provided local support to Greater Manchester Combined Authority funded Community Grant providers, including for pre-employment/learning support opportunities. The Council will continue to work collaboratively with partners to try to change delivery models within current contract restrictions and different departmental demands.

Resolved:

1. That the presentation be noted and welcomed
2. That the Assistant Director (Employment and Skills) be requested to provide a further presentation/report to the Scrutiny Board in the summer of 2025, updating members of progress.

7

STRATEGIC TRANSPORT

The Scrutiny Board received a joint presentation from the Deputy Cabinet Member for Bee Network Delivery, the Assistant Director for Planning, Transport & Housing Delivery and the Strategic Transport Team Leader that provided members with an overview of the work areas across Strategic Transport, including how these fit into the Greater Manchester picture and progress and delivery against Oldham's Transport Strategy aims. The areas that were covered in the presentation were:

- **GM Local Transport Plan (LTP)**
 - Vision Zero
 - GM School Travel Strategy
 - Bee Network
 - Bus Franchising / Bus Network Reviews
- **Oldham Transport Strategy – Progress & Delivery**
 - Home to School Travel / Safer Routes to Schools / School Streets
 - Development of Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)
 - City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) 1 / 2
 - Activation Activity / Comms / Engagement
 - Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure (EVCI) Strategy / Action Plan
 - Town Centre Car Parking Action Plan
 - Bus Network Reviews / Bee Network Committee

The presentation aimed to provide a high-level update on the Greater Manchester and Local Transport Strategy, with key areas of policy/strategy and workstreams explored in more detail. Members were advised that these were busy and exciting times for transport in Greater Manchester as the Bee Network developed and real changes were starting to be seen on the ground.

The Greater Manchester Mayor had committed to extend £2 bus fare cap across Greater Manchester through to the end of 2025 (subject to a mid-year review).

There were also several, positive announcements included in the Autumn Budget for Transport. In addition, the government

was implementing an Integrated Settlement for Greater Manchester from 2025/26 bringing meaningful local control over funding in a single flexible pot; which was in effect a vote of confidence from Government towards the devolution programme in Greater Manchester.

The Board was advised that GMCA were required to approve their final strategy and action plan at the end of November 2024. In this regard, Oldham highways officers were part of the Safer Roads Greater Manchester Partnership (SRGMP) who have developed the Strategy and Action Plan. The Vision Zero ambition was zero FLCIs (fatalities and life changing injuries) on Greater Manchester roads by 2040. The Strategy also set an interim target of a 50% reduction in road traffic deaths and life changing injuries by 2030.

The Strategy was not a funded delivery plan, ongoing funding would be required to deliver actions in full. Members were informed that an Innovation Fund worth £1m was to open as the Strategy and Action Plan are launched that partners can bid into. Oldham Council was looking to bid into this with measures likely to focus on safety around the Borough's schools and residential areas.

There was an upcoming CRSTS1 prioritisation exercise that made the case for an element of potential underspend (£30m) to be redirected to Vision Zero action plan items. The Safer Roads Greater Manchester Partnership and Vision Zero Working Group will provide input into revisions of the GM 2040 Transport Strategy (Local Transport Plan) and future GM Transport Delivery Plans, providing necessary strategic direction for this work. There was work ongoing towards Vision Zero that will progress in line with the action plan and would be monitored through action updates and Safety Performance Indicators. The intention was that the Action Plan would be reviewed every three years.

Resolved:

1. That the presentation that provided members with a high-level update on the Greater Manchester and Local Transport Strategy, be noted and welcomed.
2. That a further update report/presentation be given to the Scrutiny Board in approximately 12 months.

8

STREET LIGHTING ATTACHMENTS POLICY

The Scrutiny Board received a report of the Director of Environment which would be seeking approval from the Council's Cabinet for the implementation of a Street Lighting Attachment Policy, for the Borough. Under Section 178 of The Highways Act 1980, there was a legal requirement for any individual who wished to attach signage or equipment to a street lighting asset to obtain a licence from the local highway authority.

Members were advised that to date, the Street Lighting Service had been using a robust process to allow attachments to its

lighting columns. However, the service had identified that there was no formal Council policy in place covering the requirements of the The Highways Act and the current contract for replacement of the streetlighting assets. The Director of Environment's report therefore requested approval of a policy, which outlined the legal and council requirements for anyone wish to attached items to the streetlights.

Members were also advised that due to the Highways Act and the current PFI contractual requirements, there was no alternative option for Street Lighting Attachments. A robust process had been undertaken to ensure that the policy is fit for purposes and compliant with both the Highways Act 1980 and PFI obligations.

The Scrutiny Board was informed that the Cabinet would be considering the report at its meeting on 16th December 2024.

Resolved:

That the Place, Economic Growth and Environment Scrutiny Board support the report and recommend that the Cabinet, at its meeting on 16th December 2024 approve the recommendations contained therein.

9

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2024/25

The Scrutiny Board considered a report of the Assistant Director of Strategy and resources which provided an overview of corporate performance against agreed service business plan measures for the 2024/25 Q2 period (July-September 2024).

The report provided scrutiny of corporate performance and aimed to provide assurance that:

- a. Services were aligned to corporate priorities the needs of our residents (resident focus)
- b. That the Council's services are good or are on track to be good.
- c. That any services which are not on track, or have identified risks, are being supported or challenged to rectify this.
- d. That any demand indicators or resource pressures are being noted and service provision is being re-assessed accordingly.
- e. That the Council has robust performance management processes in place.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

10

WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Board considered its Work Programme for 2024/25.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

11

KEY DECISION DOCUMENT

The Scrutiny Panel gave consideration to the Key Decision Document which outlined key decisions that the Cabinet was due to take at its meeting on 16th December 2024 and at future meetings.



Resolved:
That the report be noted.

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RULE 13 AND 14

The Chair advised that there was nothing to report in relation to this agenda item.

The meeting started at 6.00pm and ended at 8.10pm