

Minutes of a meeting of the Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday, 28 September 2021 in Council Chamber, City Hall, Bradford

Commenced	5.30 pm
Concluded	8.40 pm

Present – Councillors

LABOUR	CONSERVATIVE	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT
Mohammed Kamran Hussain Dearden Hussain	Heseltine Felstead Davies	R Ahmed

Apologies: Councillor Chris Herd, Councillor Simon Cunningham and Councillor Rachel Sunderland

Councillor Kamran Hussain in the Chair

43. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

Councillor Choudhry declared an interest as an employee of Horton Housing (Minute 48)

Action: City Solicitor

44. MINUTES

Resolved –

That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 July 2021 be signed as a correct record.

Action: City Solicitor

45. REFERRALS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There were no referrals to the Committee.

46. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

There were no appeals submitted by the public to review decisions to restrict documents.

47. **BRADFORD BECK PILOT STUDY**

The report of the Strategic Director, Place (**Document “C”**) was submitted to the Committee to provide an update of the work carried out as part of the collaboration between the Friends of Bradford Beck (FOBB) and Bradford Council Officers. The update report came to the Committee each year so that Members were kept informed on the work being carried out.

The report gave details of the work in relation to flood prevention projects. Funding had been secured from the Yorkshire Regional Flood and Coastal Committee by working with the Environment Agency for local levy works plus additional funding was secured by the Land Drainage Department to address potential flooding. Since the flooding events in 2015 it was necessary to strategically plan for and manage potential future flooding.

Despite the impact of COVID, work streams and projects had continued throughout 2020 and into 2021. The final outcome of these would be to reduce surface water run off which would then lead to less discharge from Yorkshire Water’s combined sewer overflows that connect to the Beck, thus improving the quality of water in the natural environment.

The report and appendices provided details of the work completed in phase 1 of the Bradford Beck River Restoration project which sought to re-naturalise the northern length of Bradford Beck and re-populate fish and provide a suitable habitat to encourage bats, kingfishers and other bird species.

The report included details of the plan to re-naturalise a section of Bradford Beck between Poplars Road and Briggate. By carrying out work to divert water around a culvert which was in a state of serious disrepair, it was anticipated that the risk of flooding to nearby properties, highways and infrastructure could be mitigated as the culvert was likely to fail in future flooding events. The Beck would be realigned to provide additional flood water capacity and contribute to the aims of the Water Framework Directive to improve water quality. The project would provide more grassland, woodland and wetland which would encourage species diversity in a naturalised, stable habitat.

Land drainage and the problems connected to it were explained so that Members would have an understanding of the responsibilities and with whom these lie. The Council was responsible for drainage on land it owned but private landowners were responsible for the drainage on their land. The Council could provide advice and guidance and in the event of an issue due to maintenance on private land, it had enforcement powers but the time taken was lengthy for action to be completed. There were several stages involved if a landowner defaulted on any order which could take years to resolve.

Updates were provided on progress of two EU projects. The BEGIN project which involved a linear park along Bradford Beck to restore a more natural environment as well as retention of natural flood plain areas, introduction of new

areas and to enhance the existing greenspace with sustainable drainage incorporated into new developments. The LIFE Critical project (Horton Park) aimed to equip older neighbourhoods to adapt to climate change and investigations were underway into the reasons that Westbrook Beck was no longer running as well as installation of sustainable drainage systems in the park (SuDS).

A meeting between Bradford Council and FOBB took place to discuss the issue of sediment pollution incidents on new developments and possible steps which could be taken to mitigate against these in the future.

A workshop called 'Enabling collaborative Catchment Management' was being hosted which would assist Bradford to align flood risk proposals with other infrastructure developments to help develop projects which would do more than simply reduce flood risk.

In addition to the written report and appendices submitted to the Committee, a representative from FOBB attended the meeting and advised Members that they were pleased with the co-operation received from the Drainage Team, Landscape and Highways Departments at the Council. The Pilot Study originated as a result of funding from DEFRA to produce a Catchment Management Plan, one of only 10 in the country. The plan was downloadable should Members be interested in the finer details.

In collaboration with Yorkshire Water, pollution watch activities had taken place between March 2020 and 2021 to look for pollution problems e.g. foul water from houses etc. FOBB had taken 1350 photos and Yorkshire Water had carried out follow ups to investigate incidents. Fifty five misconnections were discovered, some of which had been rectified and some in the process of rectification.

A procedure was being set up to follow up on misconnections as agreed by the Environment Agency, FOBB, CBMDC and Yorkshire Water.

Small streams in the district had been turned into culverts over time but no maps with their locations existed and due to the problems of water going either into sewers or the river, work was underway in a collaboration between FOBB and the university of Bradford to locate and map them.

Members were then given the opportunity to make comments or ask questions. The details of these and the responses given are as below:

A Member commented that it was disappointing that the approach to enforcement for sediment control on new developments appeared to be passive. As developers had considerable resources, it was considered that funding should be built in and the clean-up should be carried out and not left to FOBB and the Council Officers advised that planning conditions to address the issue were being developed but the Environment Agency (EA) were the agency who had enforcement powers. Work was underway with the EA and developers and was always discussed at pre-planning meetings

One Member stated that other Local Authorities take action and asked why

couldn't Bradford do the same?

Officers advised that they may be using different wording in planning conditions but stated again that EA were the enforcement body. The Council could insist on work stopping if planning conditions were not being met, but as it stood, work could only be stopped if it was a public safety issue, it was still the EA who would be responsible for enforcement

A Member commented that it was good to see collaboration which would sort some of the issues with sediment pollution and asked whether the planning condition was already being implemented or was it still to be agreed and did the scope extend beyond the development site

Officers stated that they had seen it in place and the main purpose was to manage surface water. This would also manage contamination by traffic movement but it was not its' primary objective. There were other planning conditions that existed to address this type of problem. Planning and Highways Officers dealt with mud on the highways

A Member asked about the length of time before an overview would be available so it could be visualised

Officers stated that a visualisation was available on line for the naturalisation project but the complete details were still a few months away

Flood Area Plans - A Member asked what was happening further up the Aire Valley and was advised that things were happening at present and an update would be presented at the next meeting of the Committee

A Member raised an issue of flooding in a particular area and was advised to provide details to the Drainage Team so that an investigation could be carried out

There was an existing flood risk in the city centre but protection measures were already in place, other options now needed to be investigated

The question of resources to assist the FOBB and the university was raised but no specific promises could be made. The Council would continue to assist.

Resolved –

- 1. That the Friends of Bradford's Becks and the Strategic Director, Place be requested to work jointly on studies and proposals for the Canal Road area.**
- 2. That the Friends of Bradford's Becks be invited to report back on its ongoing work and this be added to the 2022/23 Work Programme**
- 3. That the report be noted and that the ongoing collaboration between Officers and the Friends of Bradford's Becks be supported**
- 4. That the Friends of Bradford Beck and Officers be thanked for their work on this ongoing project**

Action: Strategic Director, Place

48. HOMELESSNESS IN BRADFORD DISTRICT

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy was agreed by Bradford Council's Executive in January 2020 and operated in partnership with a number of organisations and agencies in delivering on the homelessness objectives. The Council was not solely responsible for delivery of all actions contained within the strategy and relied on the co-operation of its' partners to deliver and implement successfully.

There were five key themes for the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy:

- Early Intervention and prevention of homelessness
- Delivery of support in the right way at the right time to people who were homeless
- Tackle rough sleeping
- Improve access to housing for people who are homeless
- Work better together

In addition, there were five general principles which would be incorporated across each of the themes. Co-production, person-centred, recovery-focused, equality and diversity and safeguarding vulnerable people.

The identified targets for activity were:

- Increase the rates of successful prevention of homelessness
- Reduce the number of placements into temporary accommodation
- Reduce the length of stays in bed and breakfast accommodation
- Reduce the incidence of rough sleeping significantly

The report presented provided a breakdown of activity and contact made with historical statistics included for comparison. Officers explained the steady rates of contact with Housing Options and hi-lighted the increase in casework since the introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act in 2018.

The report indicated the top 5 reasons for homelessness and how it was being tackled and prevented by the Council. The measures introduced during COVID also contributed to a reduction in rough sleeping and homelessness but success rates were negatively impacted due to the static nature of housing during this period. The Council had also entered into a contract with Concept Housing whose obligation meant that they took every referral made and customers were due to be housed within twenty four hours. Most people wanted social housing but some were referred to private landlords.

The new measures of Prevention and Relief which came in under the 2017 Homelessness Act were explained and statistics for both were included. These were both measured over a six month period before a successful outcome could be counted in. Comparison tables were also made available in the report to show how Bradford performed against its' neighbours.

Officers confirmed that the service had worked hard to comply with the Government's 'Everyone In' initiative and stated that they had an exit plan for when the scheme ended in October 2021. There were forty seven people who still needed support and a plan was already in place to do this. Fairmount Lodge – this had proven to be very successful with no issues arising despite the profile of some of the residents.

The challenges and opportunities were also presented to Members with specific attention drawn to the continued decline in mental health support over the last ten years. A review of Housing Related Support provision would be taking place to ensure that delivery was effective with the available budgets. The existing gaps in provision would need an estimated additional £600,000 to address multiple needs/high risk customers. There was also a high proportion of young people and those who identified as LGBTQ+ who presented as homeless along with a shortage of adapted homes and larger homes for larger families.

The lifting of the eviction moratorium would likely produce a surge of applicants who faced eviction as a result of rent arrears, arising out of loss of income (whether it be furlough, income support or job loss).

Budget cuts were a concern as it would cause issues in long term planning.

Members were then given the opportunity to ask questions or make comments. The details of these and the responses given are as below:

- How many units did Concept housing have available?
 - Concept were taking every referral and accommodate them but not using B&B – providing crisis accommodation for 14 days
- How many private, permanent lets made?
 - 258 last year which dropped to 162
- Was the reduction in lets due to restrictions on evictions?
 - The process of triage was explained to Members as a response to this question:
 - Customer Contact team – 6 trained homelessness officers, who apply scripts and go through options.
 - Access – Housing Options Assessment
 - Call back and assessment arranged
 - Primarily telephone based and liaison taking place with immigration and the prison service
 - The plan was to go back to Outreach based assessments
- How were customers triaged through Britannia House?
 - If roofless, customers were escorted to an interview and assessed from back office staff or staff working from home. – restrictions arose out of ensuring safety of officers and customers.
- When would the service return to more 'hands on'? – The Chair commented on the disappointment that officers were not physically back in

Britannia House. There was no evidence to suggest it was unsafe for Housing Officers in Britannia House. Customers were vulnerable and desperate but there were no front line staff available.

- Officers explained the need to ensure that facilities were in place – looking at design at Britannia House but there were no timescales at the moment.
- Why were officers still working remotely?
- Officers stated that this was a corporate decision on transition and transformation of service. There was constant change on how first contact was delivered whether it was housing or any other service. The service provided had been robust throughout the pandemic and the incident discussed that took place in Britannia House would be investigated.

The Chair also commented that the service was doing a fantastic job but found it unacceptable that customers could wait hours to get through to an advisor and wanted people in place who could help. He requested that facilities should be put in place for the following Monday.

A Member queried the number of calls vs the number of cases and was advised that the calls were not all related to homelessness, other calls came in for other issues.

- What did friends/family refusal mean?
 - Officers advised that this was typically when someone was asked to leave, mainly by parents.
- High Prevention relief – what were the reasons for failure? If failed, did customers then fall into the Relief customer bracket, the success was quite high on relief, wouldn't success be higher if no-one was moving around?
 - Officers advised that the reasons were complicated – if a situation was not resolved in 56 days then the customer moves up. Relief was split between new cases or dropped down from Prevention into Relief
- As the 'Everyone In' scheme was ending was there still capacity, would the duty pass to Concept for rough sleepers, and how long was the waiting list?
 - Officers advised that only customers for whom we had a statutory duty would be passed on and that when the scheme ended, they would not be identified by the Council as eligible.
- How was the council working with private landlords?
 - Officers advised that there were some units available from Horton Housing (fixed units) and that Concept would flex up and down (temporary accommodation)

One Member commented that face to face service needed to be resolved and was informed that video conferencing was an option for outlying areas or for those who did not wish to come to Britannia House. Outlying council buildings

could be used to facilitate a service which may reduce waiting time.

- Had we analysed Relief and Prevention to see how we had improved and how had our neighbours been able to perform as they did?
 - Officers stated that access was easier when done remotely, the access in Britannia House was limited. The service was moving to a more agile mode of engagement and into the community. Evidence would be provided to demonstrate this at the next meeting.
- The eighteen bed hostel – was this within Fairmount Lodge, was it a ‘help you and ship you on facility?’
 - Officers advised that the eighteen customers were the most chaotic and difficult to help. Services and support was coming in and they were being looked after. A three year tenancy was offered and they would move on when they were able.
- Were people slipping through with the lack of face to face contact?
 - Officers advised that calls taken were for a variety of reasons but the increased accessibility has increased activity. Private sector evictions would put the numbers back up and the situation was very complex as a result of the implementation of the Act. Remote access was easy to use and the service was moving towards agile delivery within community centres etc. Localities and locations were being looked into to give people multiple ways to access at multiple access points.
- Were we safeguarding vulnerable visitors to Britannia House?
 - Officers advised that there were only small numbers of people presenting at Britannia House and that there was a separate waiting area that victims of DV could use.

Officers were asked what work had been done to help the victims of DV and responded that it was not necessary for victims to attend Britannia House. Remote assessment in refuges or outreach locations including out of hours provision was all facilitated. There was no need to physically attend in order to be assessed.

Officers were also asked how many refugees we were helping and how and advised that funding was yet to be finalised so numbers were not finalised as a result. So far we had helped 2 families and were taking 2 more. The numbers would be discussed on a future agenda and work plan.

- A Member asked how temporary accommodation was inspected and was advised that all of Concept Housing’s portfolio would be inspected.
- A Member asked if the data around young people could be scrutinised and worked back so that it could possibly be prevented?
 - Officers advised that they were working with Children’s Services and specialist support was now in place with intervention being done. There was also a Young Person’s Hub.

Work was being done with landlords to prevent evictions. Officers also explained

how allocations for housing were made using a housing allocation software system. When a property was advertised, the policy to allocate was followed and it would be offered to priority groups first.

Resolved –

- 1. That Members support the range of actions being taken to prevent and tackle homelessness in the District**
- 2. That Members note the challenges set out in the report including the pressures the service faced caused by the lifting of the evictions ban and the ending of the ‘Everyone In’ scheme**
- 3. That the Housing Options Service be encouraged to re-implement face to face interactions with customers as soon as possible**

Action: Strategic Director, Place

49. TRANSPORT DELIVERY PLAN PERFORMANCE REPORT 2019-20

The report of the Strategic Director, Place (**Document “E”**) was submitted to the Committee to provide an update on the outcome of the delivery programme for the Highways and Transportation teams’ capital work programmes during the 2019/20 financial year.

Whilst work continued on the Local transport Plan and the West Yorkshire + Transport Fund programmes, the service began development of the portfolio of schemes as part of the Transforming Cities Fund work for which the Council was awarded £89 million.

Progress was affected significantly by the COVID pandemic due to staff being redeployed, reduced personnel on construction sites and disruption to deliveries of materials.

The report provided details of the four inter-linked schemes at:

Bradford Interchange Station Access
Bradford City Centre Cycling and Walking Improvements
South Bradford Park and Ride and Bus Expressway
West Bradford Cycle Superhighway Extension

Updates on progress and details of locations for the West Yorkshire + Transport Fund and the other works underway were also provided in documents appended to the main report.

Members were then given the opportunity to ask questions and comment on the report. The details of these and the responses given are as below:

- A Member asked whether the Smart Street Lighting project was on schedule and was advised that there were three elements to the project –

Assessment/survey of columns
Design
Implementation and delivery.

There were delays in surveys and some columns needed urgent removal so it had taken a bit longer than originally planned but would still be completed on time.

- Was there evidence of demand for the mass rapid transit system?
 - Officers advised that they were working with WYCA to look at demand in 3 corridors – Bradford to Leeds, Bradford to Halifax and Bradford to Dewsbury but the mode of transport was not yet decided
- Did Bradford receive all £89million? The schemes in the report did not have costings attached.
 - Officers stated that funding went to the Combined Authority who divided it up between Local Authorities – Bradford's individual allocation was £89million. A business case for funding would be required as there was an assurance process to go through. There were no definitive costings at present as these were still being worked on plus investigation of additional funding streams.
- A Member questioned the benefits of the Transforming Cities work asking why would there be more cycle lanes and that cars would be prevented from accessing Hall Ings and from moving around. Where would this traffic go? There would be longer traffic queues.
 - Officers reiterated some of the measures to improve access into the city centre via the park and ride and express bus way. Improvements would also be brought in to improve the outer ring road to prevent traffic traversing the city
- The question of access for deliveries (goods in and out) and staff getting to work in the city centre was raised. Would customers want to come into the centre if it wasn't easy as there was easy access and free parking at out of town shopping facilities?
 - Officers stated that engagement with city centre businesses was underway as well as other stakeholders such as the Chamber of Commerce who were all very supportive. There were multiple strategies available to address these issues and routes that would facilitate access. The traffic routes model was not yet available
- How fast would the roll out of car charging points be?
 - Officers advised that the strategy was being developed to ensure that these were installed in the right locations and would be as compatible going forward as possible. The park and ride would have a solar charging facility and there were plans to utilise the new smart street lighting as charging points. It was essential to make the right investment in the right solution as the technology evolved
- There was a challenge around charging points near terraced housing and

19,000 columns to replace.

- Priority had been given to replace columns which had expired and were subject to urgent cut down. The teams were well aware of the challenge of EV charging for terraced housing and it would be looked into by the Lighting team when the permanent replacements were being fitted with the final design and location
- Was the District getting an investment in transport, buses needed to be fit for purpose
 - Officers stated that work was underway with WYCA on a bus strategy. Buses needed to be cleaner with fund to help operators either retrofit or replace vehicles.
- Was cycling encouraged and what were the incentives?
 - Officers were working with WYCA to promote cycling and provide cycleways. More cycle routes getting to more destinations
- A member asked about the clean air zone for Keighley/Bingley and was advised that using the national model of air quality the area did not exceed the limit of 40micrograms so there were no current plans. The work carried out in Bradford should not impact on these areas. Air quality monitoring was being looked into with possibility of monitors in the new street lighting columns which could send data back on pollution levels

Resolved –

That the progress on the transport programmes across both programmes described in the report be noted and that an update report be presented in 12 months' time.

Action: Strategic Director, Place

50. REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PLAN 2021-22

The Work Programme for 2021/22 (**Document “F”**) was submitted to update Members on the reports that were due to come to the Committee and the amendments in the schedule for the remainder of the municipal year.

Resolved –

That the Work Programme for 2021/22 submitted with amendments, be formally adopted.

Action: Scrutiny Lead Officer

Chair

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a correct record at the next meeting of the Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

THESE MINUTES HAVE BEEN PRODUCED, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, ON RECYCLED PAPER