

Minutes of a meeting of the Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday, 5 December 2023 in Committee Room 1 - City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 5.00 pm
Concluded 7.50 pm

Present – Councillors

LABOUR	CONSERVATIVE	GREEN	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT
K Hussain Rowe Mitchell Steele	Herd	Watson	

Apologies: Councillor Joe Wheatley, Councillor Riaz Ahmed and Councillor Safina Kauser

Councillor K Hussain in the Chair

42. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

43. REFERRALS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

No referrals were made.

44. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

No requests to view documents were received.

45. LIBRARIES UPDATE

The report of the Strategic Director, Place (**Document “U”**) was presented to the Committee and represented an update on developments across Bradford Libraries service for the previous 12 months, following on from the previous update report from December 2022. The report provided details of service performance and development under a number of themes.

- Delivering the vision and model for libraries
- Highlights from the past year
- City of Culture readiness

- Modernisation
- Green libraries

The report explained that the service was working to achieve the new vision and model (Building a Better Future) as agreed by Executive in 2020. This was now considered the 'business as usual' standard as a model of continuous improvement and modernisation to contribute to a wider range of Council priorities and was aiming to make the service more sustainable.

The report also included a table of key performance indicators (KPI's) and an overview of visitor statistics, that showed a good level of service recovery post pandemic and increased engagement in activities and events. It also raised concerns relating to loan recovery and lack of funding to maintain a quality reading offer which would inevitably impact on customer use and satisfaction. A number of highlighted events were summarised with work being carried out in preparation for Year of Culture in 2025.

Officers provided a summary of some of the activities and opportunities including automatic library membership for babies, Dementia Friendly training for staff working towards libraries of sanctuary status, Health Champions, exercise classes, bumper engagement in the summer Reading Challenge and the creation of the Shipley Enterprise Hub. Officers also stated that there was a shift from use of the libraries' PC's to people using their own devices. With the pre-existing budget deficit still ongoing, one initiative had been to streamline evening opening hours which was implemented after consultation with the public.

Members were then given the opportunity to comment and ask questions, the details of which and the responses given are as below.

With reference to the consultation on changes to opening hours, of which 73% were in favour, a Member asked how many people had been polled. Officers stated that it was under 2000 and precise numbers could be provided.

Members were surprised that those polled were in favour of reduced access to library services in the evening and asked what kinds of questions were included in the consultation document. Officers advised that the questionnaire provided some contextual information such as the ad hoc closures and that evenings were not the busiest times. By reducing the hours, the opening times would be more reliable.

A Member raised the subject of digital exclusion and commented on the reduction in PC sessions as users were switching to mobile devices. Officers confirmed that user needs were targeted and PC sessions were still available to those who needed it with assistance being provided.

In relation to figures quoted in the report, a Member sought clarification on whether these included community libraries which they did.

Further comments are bullet pointed below.

- A Member referred to a statement from the report regarding funding for new stock stating that it was an unusual statement.

- Another Member said the report presented a transformation of the service.
- The veterans' 'drop in' created a good and positive environment with really good staff

A Member then asked Officers to provide further clarification in relation to the comment regarding funding for new stock and whether this was a local and/or national problem. Officers advised that it related to cut backs required from 2019. The Public Health department had stepped in with funding but there was a funding gap still. Other library services had more to spend and it was included to provide some factual information. The Libraries Service was exploring options to bridge the gap and were in discussions with third parties.

A Member asked if the projected overspend of 10% was as a result of rising costs. Officers advised that premises costs had increased as well as generic running costs such as energy but the gap was mainly due to unachieved savings from 2019/20. The service was in the bottom quartile for funding which was a legacy issue.

A Member commented that volunteers were not mentioned in the report and was advised that they were an essential part of the service but there was no significant focus or changes for the year and that the service was looking to develop a Council volunteer programme.

A Member commented on other commercial uses being made of library premises to generate income.

A Member asked about Quiet spaces and were there facilities for this. Officers advised that it was more difficult to provide in small libraries, but they were able to schedule activities and advise potential users on quiet times.

A Member asked if the service accepted book donations and was advised that they do but it took a lot of staff time to check and verify whether any particular books were needed, whether sufficient numbers were already available and to process them ready for loan. New books, obtained directly from suppliers were 'shelf-ready'.

A Member asked about income and income growth and where it was coming from and Officers advised that they were looking into venue hire with the creation of more flexible meeting spaces, research fees for local studies, reprographics plus activities and events.

Referring back to digital inclusion, a Member asked if any plans were made to provide training and was advised that a scheme was devised called 'Learn My Way' which was a basic IT skills course. Work would be undertaken in collaboration with Skills House whose advisors would come in and offer basic training.

Resolved –

1. **That the report be noted.**
2. **That a further update report be circulated electronically to Members in 12 months' time via the Chair.**

***To be actioned by:* The Chair, Regeneration and Environment OSC**

46. BRADFORD THEATRES

The report of the Strategic Director, Place (**Document "V"**) was presented to the Committee to provide Members with information relating to the current challenges and opportunities presented to the Theatres service in the run up to City of Culture 2025.

The report provided an overview of the aims of the service with details of the various venues that made up the offer in Bradford. It also included an account of what occurred as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic and subsequent barriers due to the ongoing cost of living crisis, inflation and travel cost increases. There was a change in booking habits and availability of productions which, in turn drove production costs up.

Attendance data was broken down year by year and indicated that ticketed attendance was recovering to near pre-pandemic levels so there was a more positive position. Due to the shift in marketing practices, the service had employed a digital marketing officer to develop and enhance the service's online presence and functionality. Financial data from 2020 to 2023 provided a breakdown of costs and income and details of grants from central government during the Covid restrictions.

Officers presented a summary of the report and provided some additional information in relation to the types of productions that were being hosted. Bradford Theatres did not produce shows, being a host venue only. They were also able to provide details of the recovery post Covid. A recent survey showed that a large number of bookings were made by individuals and that bookings were made more last minute. Heat pump infrastructure works being carried out near the Alhambra had caused some problems. They also noted the possible impact of 'Bradford Live' on St Georges Hall.

Officers also reported that the reduction in parking provision in the city centre was now deemed as inadequate. On a more positive note, they had met budget expectations and had brought in extra revenue. In addition, all venues were now 'Martyn's Law' compliant.

Members were then given the opportunity to ask questions and comment, the details of which and the responses given are as below.

In relation to parking pressures, A Member asked whether any discussions were taking place with public transport operators to support the night time economy. Officers advised that it was on the agenda for the 2025 team. They also stated that the public liked to use their cars as they wanted to be safe. There were some considerations being given to holding performances as matinees or with earlier

evening start times so that people would not be out in the city centre as late in the evening.

Officers were asked if there were any incentives offered to use public transport and advised Members that discussions were taking place with bus and rail operators.

In response to a Member's comment who stated that he had received multiple copies of the theatres brochure, Officers advised that a data cleanse was carried out each year to avoid duplication and were able to report that the number of brochures being printed and posted out had been reduced.

A Member asked about uncertainty when booking as Officers had stated that money had been lost during Covid as refunds were not always given, less people were attending each year and was expensive, especially at Christmas.

A Member stated that it was expensive for families to attend productions and asked if there was anything being done to help those who could not afford to attend a performance. Officers advised that entry level tickets were available with considerable post-Christmas discounts on offer. These were specific and targeted into certain areas such as community centres.

Due to the high level of deprivation in the District, Officers were asked if there were any incentives for low-income families. Officers advised that there was no blanket offer and tickets sold via contacts and schools did not sell out. There was a brief discussion regarding discounted tickets being offered using a secret ballot.

Resolved –

- 1. That the report be noted.**
- 2. That a further update report be circulated electronically to Members in 12 months' time via the Chair.**

***To be actioned by:* The Chair, Regeneration and Environment OSC**

47. BRADFORD MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES SERVICE

The report of the Strategic Director, Place (**Document "W"**) was presented to the Committee to provide Members with an update relating to forward plans, current challenges and opportunities including service development that was undertaken since the previous report was presented in November 2022.

The Bradford Museums and Galleries service launched a 10-year plan in January 2022 with a mission statement with the ambition to ensure that everyone in the District had opportunities and access to ambitious, world class art, heritage and cultural experiences.

Alongside the written report, Officers provided a verbal summary of the main highlights and work being carried out.

- Museum Accreditation was re-awarded in April 2023 by the Arts Council

England

- Arts Council England announced the award of National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) status to Bradford Museums & Galleries in November 2022 with funding for a 3-year development and activity plan – details were included in the written report

The value of the Bradford Museums and Galleries offer was contingent on achieving Accreditation. As a result of the NPO status award, 6 new staff (5.5FTE) were recruited for the duration of the programme (until March 2026).

- Improving accessibility with site access audits which would feed into the actions plan in order to be fully DDA compliant
- Income from school attendance increased
- Partners with the V&A Museum – Design Lab Nation programme
- Established a target for family and repeat visitors which had been exceeded
- Local foster carer and CLA programmes
- National award given for Windrush partnership exhibition work
- Significant increase in the number of volunteers – now exceeded 100
- New Young Ambassador scheme – this would be developed as part of NPO
- Provision of work experience opportunities
- Provision of industry work placements

Members were then given the opportunity to ask questions and comment, the details of which and the responses given are as below.

Members commented on the great initiatives with work experience and industry placements.

A Member commented on the varied locations and noted that some were difficult to get to, due to the nature of the topography in the District and asked if there was a travel plan and how visitors were travelling to visit locations. They asked if there was anything that could be done to encourage sustainable travel options. Officers advised that they were in the process of obtaining some anecdotal information on travel options and as part of the NPO, visitor evaluations would provide them with this and other valuable information which could be shared.

A Member asked why the weekly closure day was always on a Monday and was advised that it allowed for work to be carried out and to manage staff costs down. They further added that rotas had been looked into in the past but it was generally the same in the sector.

A Member asked if there were any items in the Bradford collections that should be returned and was advised that it was most likely there were some artefacts held in the permanent collection with uncertain provenance and the museum service was actively looking at a restitution policy development in light of recent national discussions concerning colonial era collection and acquisition.

A Member asked about the number of schools visiting. The percentage quoted in the report said that 62% of schools in the district were utilising the schools service and asked about the other 38% who were not and whether anything was being done to encourage them as well. Officers stated that there were always reasons

why a significantly higher percentage of schools could not visit, with capacity being the main issue. The service was already looking into alternative ways to engage with schools as they committed to working with all schools.

Members also congratulated Officers on the work with volunteers in an impressive range of buildings. They also noted the 'gamification' of collections in collaboration with Ph.D students from Leeds Beckett University which would, amongst other things, facilitate VR tours.

Resolved –

- 1. That the report be noted.**
- 2. That a further update report be circulated electronically to Members in 12 months' time via the Chair.**

To be actioned by: the Chair, Regeneration and Environment OSC

48. TRANSPORT DELIVERY PLAN PERFORMANCE REPORT 2022-23

The report of the Strategic Director, Place (**Document "M"**) was presented to provide Members with an update on the outcomes of the Highways and Transportation teams delivery programme on capital works programmes during 2022/23.

The report provided information on sources of funding and the challenges faced arising from the aftermath of Covid-19 and inflationary pressures.

Schemes successfully awarded funding from the Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) were listed as below with an allocation of £89 million.

- a) Bradford Interchange Station Access.
- b) Bradford City Centre Cycling and Walking Improvements.
- c) South Bradford Park and Ride and Bus Expressway; and
- d) West Bradford Cycle Superhighway Extension.

The West Yorkshire + Transport Fund consisted of a number of programmes either underway or completed. A number of additional schemes either managed by WYCA or led by other district Councils on Bradford's behalf were also reported including details of costs that impacted on Bradford's transport network.

An additional £2.5 million was awarded to support active travel schemes with examples included for Members' information, as well as a summary of work programmes as part of the Integrated Transport Block of the Local Transport Plan with indicative costings provided.

An update on Smart Street Lighting scheme indicating the scale of work to be carried out following a survey. The project would also include a dynamic control system and data collection to inform on faults and power consumption. Other LoRAWAN sensors could also be installed to capture data for the Council as well as the public and private sectors. The work to be completed would be a combination of contractor and in-house teams dependant on workload levels.

Other updates included the programme of Mass Rapid Transit such as light rail or tram as new low-carbon travel modes, Northern Powerhouse Rail which was transferred to DfT meaning less local input, electric vehicle charging points as these were related and relevant to Highways and Transport, despite sitting outside of the departments' budget.

Members were then given the opportunity to ask questions and comment, the details of which and the responses given are as below.

A Member asked whether an evaluation of active travel schemes had been carried out and what their impacts were as part of the ATF tranche 1 funding. Officers replied that the schemes were developed and implemented quickly in response to Covid pandemic so there had been no pre-scheme monitoring so no baseline data was available to to post-scheme monitoring.

The Member then asked whether any other information or feedback was available. Officers advised that ATF tranche 2 had included public consultation and engagement and was delivered differently to ATF 1. There was no pre-monitoring for ATF 2. As schemes were undertaken in ATF3 and 4, comparisons and contrasts of the benefits would enable the necessary learning between 1 and 4 to develop measures on the network.

A Member referred to the report and work not undertaken as part of ATF tranche 3 and asked whether the work would go ahead and whether it would be within the timescales quoted. Officers advised that work would not be carried out by the original date as intended and that funding was being sought.

Some School Streets had been delivered but there were no figures available. Members asked if the funding was being re-allocated. Officers advised that Active Travel England had changed the requirements, so schemes were more expensive, meaning other schemes had to be back-funded.

Members asked whether officers were confident that their funding wouldn't disappear or be re-allocated and were advised that they were and that the schemes for hospitals and schools would proceed but one as delayed.

A Member asked about the ongoing work installing EV charging points on lampposts as they had been made aware that this was not possible after all. Officers confirmed that this was correct as the lampposts were not suitable for high voltage loads. The CAZ team were researching into trials with other parties.

The conversation then moved onto EV charging points installed in homes as they were only suitable for emergency use. A Member asked whether it was a question of the quality of the equipment being installed or unclear planning requirements without specifications to ensure they were fit for purpose.

There was a brief discussion regarding EV charging and the power drain on the network. Engagement work was needed with the power suppliers, especially if installing at council owned locations etc.

A Member asked Officers to comment on interim measures in relation to

construction works from Appx 3, figure 8.2 of the report and whether they could confirm that infrastructure building as part of the various schemes would not increase the impact of motor vehicle use. Officers stated that the DfT tool was unlikely to become reality and WYCA have their own measuring tool. Reduction in carbon emissions was very much a learning journey.

A Member asked about what was being done to mitigate the polluting effects of road run off. Officers explained how materials used contained pollutants within themselves by filtering and moderating run off to reduce the size and quantity of particles finding their way into adjacent land and water courses.

A member asked various questions in relation to the new Bradford Interchange and station and how rail and bus services would interlink. As there was more than one option including a relocation of both services with mass transit into the city centre a business case would be needed to assess the various transport solutions.

Resolved –

- 1. That the report be noted.**
- 2. That further update reports be submitted in 12 months' time and be presented as separate reports focussed on Strategy and Operations.**

To be actioned by: Strategic Director, Place

49. REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2023-24

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