

## Community and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Panel

The council is now holding virtual meetings. This plays a part in helping us to maintain the safety of the public, staff and councillors.

The City Mayor has asked that, as far as possible, there is still public involvement and input into the decision-making process.

Therefore, should you wish to raise a question or comment on any of the items listed, which will be presented at the meeting on your behalf, you can do so in writing, by sending an email to the address at the bottom of this agenda.

Please do this by 4.30pm on the day before the meeting is due to take place.

Further information on the coronavirus and what it means for Salford can be found on the council website - <https://www.salford.gov.uk/coronavirus>

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**DATE: Monday, 16 November 2020**

**TIME: 2.00 pm**

**VENUE: Microsoft Teams Meeting**

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### AGENDA

**THE PROCEEDINGS OF THIS MEETING CAN BE VIEWED LIVE ON THE DAY VIA THE FOLLOWING LINK:**

[https://teams.microsoft.com/join/19%3ameeting\\_MmFkOTQ0ZWItNDgyZi00YmQ4LWI3MjEtZmM5YmFiOGYzMzc4%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%2268c00060-d80e-40a5-b83f-3b8a5bc570b5%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22573d04a0-0ae6-41ac-938f-3d1aa4fc5fd1%22%2c%22IsBroadcastMeeting%22%3a%22true%7d](https://teams.microsoft.com/join/19%3ameeting_MmFkOTQ0ZWItNDgyZi00YmQ4LWI3MjEtZmM5YmFiOGYzMzc4%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%2268c00060-d80e-40a5-b83f-3b8a5bc570b5%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22573d04a0-0ae6-41ac-938f-3d1aa4fc5fd1%22%2c%22IsBroadcastMeeting%22%3a%22true%7d)

- 1 **Apologies**
- 2 **Declarations of Interest**
- 3 **Minutes of meeting held on 19 October 2020 and matters arising** (Pages 1 - 4)
- 4 **Citywide Commercial Catering - Update (to follow/be tabled)**
- 5 **Bereavement Services - Update (to follow/be tabled)**
- 6 **Pest Control - Update** (Pages 5 - 10)
- 7 **Work Programme 2020/21** (Pages 11 - 14)

**8 Any other business**

**9 Next Meeting - 18 January 2021**

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## COMMUNITY AND NEIGHBOURHOODS SCRUTINY PANEL

19 October 2020

Meeting commenced: 2.00 p.m.  
“ ended: 4:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Burch - in the Chair

Councillors Fletcher, Karen Garrido, Humphreys, Mullen, Ryan, Turner, Joan Walsh and Wheeler.

OFFICERS: David Seager - Assistant Director, Operational and Commercial Services

David Robinson - Head of Service, Streetscene and Parks

John Wooderson - Head of Service, Urban Renewal

Neil Smith - Regulatory Services Officer

Mike Tuson - Salford Community Leisure

Asa Keenan - Salford Youth Alliance

Mike Relph - Senior Democratic Services Adviser

### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Barnes, Boshell, Lancaster and Warner.

### 2. MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 21 September, 2020, were approved as a correct record.

Reference was made to continuing issues with the GMP iOPS crime data recording system (Previous Minute 4(d) - 21 September 2020) and when these were likely to be resolved. It was indicated this would be investigated and update provided.

### 3. SALFORD COMMUNITY LEISURE (SCL) - SUMMER PROVISION 2020

The Chief Executive of SCL submitted a report which provided an overview of the activities for young people which had been held over the summer months and the additional challenges Covid-19 and observing social distancing had presented in delivering these.

Members raised issues, commented on, and noted them, as follows:

(a) What were the reasons for the relatively low female participation? The logistics of staging the activities had perhaps resulted in them being predominately ones which were traditionally regarded as male orientated. In addition, them being staged outdoors, rather than indoors, could have made them less attractive to young females.

(b) What was the reason for the apparent low take up in Swinton and Pendlebury? The early start of these may have been a factor, as well as the poor weather on the days they were held.

(c) What was the number of staff involved with these events compared to normal, when there were no social distancing restrictions? Normally the ratio of staff to young people would be 1:10, but to ensure effective social distancing that was now 1:4, which in turn, limited the total number who could participate.

(d) Despite the lack of promotion, for obvious reasons, the attendance at the events had been good.

RESOLVED: THAT the report be noted and thanks be extended to all those involved in the successful programme of events.

#### 4. WASTE STRATEGY AND GREATER MANCHESTER CONTRACT - UPDATE

The Strategic Director for Place provided a presentation which provided an overview of waste and recycling, together with the Greater Manchester waste and recycling disposal contract and associated waste strategy 2020, which covered the following key areas/themes:

- GM Waste Disposal Contract - update
  - Background/context - GMCA partnership with Suez
  - GMCA Waste Board - Salford City Council representation
  - Contract performance indicators/statistics
  - Impact of Covid-19 and contingency measures
- Environment Bill 2020 - England's Resource and Waste Strategy
  - Objectives/proposals
  - Implications particularly proposed consistent nationwide waste and recycling collections

Members raised issues, commented on, and noted them, as follows:

(a) On a visit to the Greater Manchester waste recycling facility in Wythenshawe in 2018, an excess of paper products had been identified, for which there was no ready market. Was this the still case? The recycling of paper waste was on target and being managed, though sometimes, due to the poor quality of the waste products concerned, the only option was to dispose of it to create energy, rather than recycling it.

(b) Did the Environment Bill address the need for producers and retailers to have a responsibility for recycling. This was covered in the Bill, as was the introduction of a plastic deposit return scheme. The key thrust was on the reduction of waste and reuse instead.

(c) Did the Bill propose greater local autonomy in terms of recycling policies, particularly the requirement of businesses in this regard? There was reference to the devolution of such powers, but these were non-specific, nor gave any indication as with whom the enforcement of them would rest.

(d) Concerns were expressed at the “6 Bin” policy for every home which the Bill proposed, both in terms of cost, logistics and the potential confusion it could cause, in turn discouraging recycling and negatively impacting on rates.

(e) There was a possible need to ensure new housing developments had “built in” recycling facilities. Such facilities had benefits, as well as well as drawbacks, including the cost. In addition, while developers could be encouraged to incorporate them into residential schemes, there was currently no statutory requirement for them to do so.

RESOLVED: (1) THAT presentation and its contents be noted.

(2) THAT the Panel’s reservations to the potential implications of the proposals of the Environment Bill 2020 - England’s Resource and Waste Strategy be added in support of the representations being made on behalf of Salford City Council

5. RENEWAL OF DOG CONTROL OF PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION ORDERS (PSPOs)

The Strategic Director for Place provided a presentation which provided an overview of the City Council’s Dog Warden Service, particularly its activities in promoting responsible dog ownership, together with the recent renewal of PSPOs relating to dog control in Salford’s parks, public spaces and cemeteries and the reintroduction of dog exclusion areas, such as for children’s play areas.

[Salford City Council Dog Control PSPOs](#)

Members raised issues, commented on, and noted them, as follows:

(a) Whether there had been an increase in abandoned pets during the Covid-19 pandemic. There was no evidence to suggest this as the case.

(b) It was agreed the use of stencilled warnings on pavements, requesting owners picked up dog waste and disposed of it responsibly, was an effective and relatively inexpensive deterrent. It was also indicated it could be quickly implemented in any areas which were experiencing such problems, if requested. Similar promotional/advisory stickers, to be placed on lampposts, could also be provided to residents.

(c) What work was done with commercial dog walkers? There was regular engagement with them, normally through a variety of events, where guidance was provided and awareness raised about relevant issues/problems.

(d) Reference was made to the low number of fixed penalty notices issued for dog fouling and associated offences. The level of evidence required often made this difficult and while enforcement was taken seriously and applied in appropriate circumstances, there was generally an emphasis instead on prevention and promoting responsible dog ownership.

RESOLVED: THAT presentation and its contents be noted.

6. WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21

Members gave consideration to the Panel's Work Programme for 2020/21.

RESOLVED: (1) THAT the Panel's Work Programme for 2020/21, be noted.

(2) THAT the following issues be incorporated into the Panel's Work Programme 2020/21 and arrangements made for them to be considered at a future meeting(s):

- Pest Control, including current contract with United Utilities
- Trees - preservation and replacement policies
- Allotments - usage, demand, waiting lists
- Services for older people during Covid-19 pandemic, particularly for those who are "shielding"

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Panel would be held on Monday, 16<sup>th</sup> November, 2020, commencing at 2.00 pm.

Part 1 - Open to the Public	ITEM NO.
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## REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR PLACE

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To Scrutiny Panel  
ON 16<sup>th</sup> November 2020

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TITLE: Pest Control - Rat Population in Salford

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RECOMMENDATION: That the Scrutiny Panel note the actions already taken to control the rat population in the City.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The purpose of this report is to update Scrutiny Panel following concerns raised that the Authority is being experiencing an increase in the rat population. The report provides details of: -

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- the number of treatments undertaken in each ward in 2020 in comparison to 2019,
  - the systems in place to respond to rats in public areas,
  - the work undertaken with social landlords throughout Salford
  - the sewer baiting programme undertaken for United Utilities
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### BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

1. Future of the Pest Control / Dog Warden Service and proposed charging arrangements report to Cabinet on the 16<sup>th</sup> October 2018
2. Review of Pest Control Charges report to the Strategic Director November 2015

KEY DECISION: No

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### 1.0 Background:

Scrutiny Panel will be aware of concerns raised by some members that the rat population in Salford is perceived to be increasing.

Reports using our current reporting systems indicate that intelligence, requests and complaints received from various sources to the Pest Control Service do not indicate any significant changes in rodent activity either by location, month or year after reviewing reports from the last 2 years

## 2.0 Information

Whilst not requiring the Local Authority to have its own pest control service, the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949 imposes a duty on local authorities to maintain its own land free of rats and mice and inspect the Local Authority area from time to time for the same purpose. In addition, it empowers local authorities to serve a notice on owners or occupiers of land infested by rats or mice requiring them to fulfil the occupier's duty to eradicate the rodent infestation.

The Act requires the Local Authority to take such steps as may be necessary to secure so far as practicable that their district is kept free from rats and mice. The in-house pest control service has largely fulfilled this requirement and is an effective means of controlling the rodent population within the City. Without it, there will be many more circumstances where the Authority would need to address concerns raised by residents at a higher cost to the Authority by taking enforcement action against these residents.

The pest control service has evolved following reports to the Strategic Director in November 2015 and a report to Cabinet in October 2018 that introduced a call out charge for all pest control treatments and the merger of the pest control and dog warden service to increase the capacity within the service to deal with seasonal demand. In addition, in May 2020 we introduced for residents the ability to report online, rodents in a public place, where there is no requirement for a fee for us to investigate a rat issue in their neighbourhood under the Prevention of Damage by Pest Act.

## 3.0 Detail:

### 3.1 Treatment Programme

Our treatments are predominantly booked [online via our website](#) on to Zipporah and they do not indicate a significant difference in reports by year or ward between 2019 and 2020 with a total for all wards of 863 treatments in 2019 and 866 in 2020 (to November). The statistics indicate an increase in 15 wards and a decrease in 5 wards.

Given the fact that there are several weeks remaining until the end of the calendar year, experience would indicate that although the overall number of treatments carried out will be higher than in 2019, the level of the increase will be within the historical level of variation year to year.

Experience shows that annual fluctuations in the number of reports of rats of up to 15% are not unusual, driven by a range of issues that influence the number of reports, including temperature, rainfall or on a more localised level, the impacts of major developments or civil engineering projects.

However, these reassuring figures at the citywide level do mask some more significant changes at the ward level, with some wards seeing reductions of around one third in reports but with a small number of wards showing a significant increase in reporting in both percentage and absolute terms.

This shift in the reporting pattern appears to be consistent with the findings of academic research into the impacts of the pandemic on rat populations, as discussed later in this report.

The wards with significant increases in reporting of rats are Eccles, Winton and Boothstown and Ellenbrook. Officers have reviewed the service demands in those areas and the treatments undertaken and can confirm there are no underlying causes for the increases in these wards other than the usual variance seen historically. There was also an alleged spike of notifications to ward councillors earlier in 2020 around the Morrison's superstore in Eccles. A review of this was undertaken and it was confirmed this was down to a small piece of wasteland near to the For-Housing office where a few active burrows were found, and these were successfully treated in partnership with For-Housing.

Officers have also contacted colleagues across other Greater Manchester authorities and no authority has indicated any significant change in their rat populations either, with all authorities, (except for Bolton MBC) charging for rodent treatments.

Reports of treatments requested by the commercial sector, including Social Landlords (as detailed in background document 5) showed not significant change with 204 rats reported in 2019 and 214 in 2020.

### 3.2 Fees and Charges

This issue was discussed and detailed in the previous reports and there has been no significant increase in the charge for rodents with a call out charge kept at the June 2019 charge of £45 as agreed with the Strategic Director. This fee is significantly less than the cost of that treatment to the Authority (approximately £100) and less than commercial charges in this sector.

### 3.3 Sewer Baiting Programme

United Utilities own most of the sewer network in Salford and pay £15,000 per annum to the service to undertake. This equates to the service lifting and if necessary, treating approximately 1500 manholes per year. The team utilise the Pests in a Public Place and other potential hot spots from commercial and domestic treatments to inform the sewers the service treats. Intelligence from our pest control operatives and officers within the Highways Team within Place Directorate have not reported any noticeable activity within the sewer network within the previous two years.

The contract with United Utilities has been in place for several years and its value has not increased during that time. The impact of the reduction of the real term value of the contract due to inflation has been managed by reducing the number of manholes examined and bated each year.

In order to maintain the effectiveness of the programme and to protect the council's financial position officers will approach colleagues at United Utilities to seek a review of the contract early in 2021.

### 3.4 External Research in to perceived increases in rodent populations

In order to control the spread of SARS-CoV-2, the UK government announced the first lockdown in March 2020. Regulatory services have been advised that there have been increased sightings of rats during the period from March until October this year.

It has been established that populations of rats increase after natural catastrophes, and this could be the same with the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>2</sup>

Reporting in Salford City region may be in part due to the closure of business premises, including catering outlets, the lack of footfall on the street leading to less litter and less food being readily available. This in conjunction with more people being at home, so more attuned to what is happening in their locality. A study undertaken in July this year, found that the number of people reporting rats; had increased since the start of the pandemic <sup>2</sup>

Michael H. Parsons, a visiting research scholar at Fordham University, stated in the New York Times that “rats usually don’t travel far for food and water. This minimises the risk of them being seen by people and predators”<sup>3</sup>

Jim Fredericks, the chief entomologist for the National Pest Management Association further stated that “more rats are venturing out during daytime hours and entering homes that had not previously seen rodent activity”. Dr Fredericks continued “there is no evidence that rats can be infected with Covid-19 or that they can spread it to humans; still they are a public health risk”<sup>3</sup>.

Discussing the increased sightings of rats, Charlie Lee, a wildlife management specialist at Kansas State University, stated that “it’s probably that people are spending more time in locations that they haven’t spent that length of time in previously, and it gives them a greater opportunity to observe rats in those locations.”<sup>2</sup>

In May of this year the City Council launched a Rats in Public Places App where members of the public could report rats they saw in their community. The number of reports averages 2 per day. The intelligence from this APP is used to form the baiting programme for the public sewer system. The money to undertake this work is funded by United Utilities. It should be noted however that the pest control team, and the highways section of the City Council has not seen an increase in rat activity within the public sewer system.

The key points to note from the review of articles, and the comparison of data for the last two years identifies the following:

- Research is ongoing and incomplete;
- this phenomenon is worldwide;
- research with pest control companies, shows that the overall number of complaints stay’s roughly the same, however 30/40% of calls are from first time customers.

- the changes witnessed in rat behaviour, where they are moving into areas not previously seen, is in order to seek food.
- changes in human behaviour – leading to less food waste being readily available, especially from food businesses, people spending more time at home and able to observe rats.
- there is no evidence that rats carry Covid 19.
- there is increased aggression reported, but it appears to be rat on rat, there is no evidence of increased aggression towards humans

**1.Rats and the COVID-19 pandemic: Early data on the global emergence of rats in response to social distancing**

<https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.07.05.20146779v1> [7th July 2020]

**2.Rats on the Rise: Reports of Rodents Have Increased During Pandemic:**  
<https://www.drovers.com/article/rats-rise-reports-rodents-have-increased-during-pandemic> [31st August 2020]

**3.C.D.C. Warns of ‘Aggressive’ Rats Searching for Food During Shutdowns:**  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/24/us/cdc-coronavirus-rats.html> [24th May 2020]

**Conclusion**

Before the introduction of charges for rodent treatments there was a fluctuation of rat numbers from year to year across the City. Therefore, although it is acknowledged there has been a small change in rodent complaints within certain wards there is empirical evidence to support the assumption that the rodent population has significantly increased in Salford and as indicated in the research any increases may be solely due to a raised awareness by residents and changes in behaviour resulting from the current pandemic. It is therefore recommended that no further changes to the existing service are recommended.

KEY COUNCIL POLICIES: Health

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND IMPLICATIONS: None  
 ASSESSMENT OF RISK: N/A

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS: None

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS: None

PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS: None

HR IMPLICATIONS:  
 None

OTHER DIRECTORATES CONSULTED: None

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WARDS TO WHICH REPORT RELATES: All

**Community and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Panel  
Work Programme 2020/21**

<b>SCHEDULE OF COMMITTEE DATES &amp; AGENDA ITEMS</b>		
<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic/Action</b>	<b>Responsible officer(s)</b>
16 <sup>th</sup> November 2020	Citywide Commercial Catering (focus on school meals service and re-opening of venues post lockdown) - Update	Dominic Clarke
	Bereavement Services - Update	Dominic Clarke
	Pest Control (focus on rat problem and current SCC contract for “baiting” with United Utilities)	John Wooderson
<i>December</i>	<i>No meeting</i>	-
18 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	Trees - preservation and replacement policies	Annie Surtees
	Meadows Scheme	Annie Surtees
15 February 2021	TBC	
15 March 2021	TBC	
<i>April</i>	<i>No meeting</i>	

## Community and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Panel Work Programme 2020/21

<b>ABEYANCE LIST</b>	
Protocol for Managing Unauthorised Encampments - current legislation and requirements of local authorities ( <i>information provided further consideration by Panel required to be confirmed</i> )	Stephen Kearney/ Peter Openshaw
Greater Manchester Fire Plan ( <i>consultation currently postponed</i> )	
Greater Manchester Fire Plan ( <i>consultation currently postponed</i> )	
Update on disabled access to cemeteries and surrounding grounds (TBC)	
Unreported crime and its impact in resulting discrepancies in GMP crime statistics (TBC)	
Update on disabled access to cemeteries and surrounding grounds (TBC)	
Salford City Council Call Centre Performance including Spirit of Salford Helpline (TBC)	
Allotments - usage, demand, waiting lists (TBC)	
Trees - preservation and replacement policies (see 18/1/21)	

## Community and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Panel Work Programme 2020/21

The following items highlighted in blue are potential ones identified following a recent meeting with the Lead Member for Anti-Poverty, Neighbourhoods, Financial Inclusion and Equalities

Covid-19 Pandemic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “social” impact on older generation, isolation and access to services</li> <li>• Social inequalities identified</li> </ul>	
Tackling Poverty, Equalities and Inclusion Economic Strategies - possible action arising from Council Policy Forum 16/12/20	
Future role/format of community committees (post May 2021)	
Free School Meals and “Holiday Hunger”	

## Community and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Panel Work Programme 2020/21

Portfolio of the Board	Membership
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Community Safety</li> <li>2. Communities and Neighbourhoods</li> <li>3. Regulatory Services (including Environmental Health, Trading Standards, Licensing)</li> <li>4. Operational Services (including Citywide, bereavement, operational transport, refuse and street cleansing, parks management, grounds maintenance)</li> <li>5. Salford Community Leisure Client</li> <li>6. Cultural strategy</li> <li>7. to be the designated Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee</li> <li>8. To scrutinise the council's business plan and budget in this functional area.</li> </ol>	<p>Councillor Burch (Chair)  Councillor Karen Garrido (Deputy Chair)  Councillor Barnes  Councillor Fletcher  Councillor Humphreys  Councillor Mullen  Councillor Ryan  Councillor Turner  Councillor Walker  Councillor Joan Walsh  Councillor Warner  Councillor Wheeler</p>