

Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2016

Present:

Councillor Rawlins - In the Chair

Councillors Ahmed Ali, Alijah, Cookson, Cooley, Evans, Fletcher- Hackwood, Grimshaw, Hassan, Madeleine Monaghan, Pritchard, Sharif Mahamed and Knowles

Councillor Andrews, Executive Member for Adult Health and Wellbeing

Councillor Priest, Deputy Leader

Councillor Rahman, Executive Member for Culture and Leisure

Jon Burke, formerly of Manchester Disabled Peoples Access Group (MDPAG),
Seconded to Manchester City Council

CEESC/16/06 Urgent Business

The Chair advised members the meeting would close early to enable any members that wanted to attend the vigil of Jo Cox MP who was recently tragically killed.

CEESC/16/07 Minutes

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 25 May 2016 as a correct record.

CEESC/16/08 M4 Translations

The Committee received a report of the Head of Strategic Communications, which provided an outline of the Translations and Interpreting Services within Communications and its strategic direction. The report outlined how the service has performed in the last few years. The Committee welcomed the Head of Strategic Communications, the Communications Lead (Operational & Commercial) and the Communications Support Service Manager.

A member welcomed the report stating he was proud the Council had achieved the excellent status for Equality. Members sought clarification on several points within the report including the language categories used. Officers explained the data was taken from the Office of National Statistics (ONS). Members questioned the rationale for the strategic review; including the cost of carrying out the review to the Council. The Head of Strategic Communications responded that since the planned review was internal the only costs would be officer time. She explained the purpose of the review was to understand whether the current service was sustainable and consider how best to deliver the service in future. In response to members' queries, she explained that there was a core team of permanent employees who dealt with the most common high volume languages and a larger pool of flexible freelance workers that could be drawn upon for languages that were less common. Members welcomed that the service was generating income for the Council and questioned whether this could be expanded. The Head of Strategic Communications said it was

important not to pre-determine the outcome of the review but that this would be a consideration.

Members discussed safeguarding and sought re-assurance that all interpreters provided satisfactory Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks. The Communications Support Service Manager advised that all permanent employees provided DBS checks, which, in line with current guidance, were repeated every three years. Members were assured that everyone that worked alone with children or vulnerable adults was required to provide a DBS check. He explained that most freelance workers had completed DBS checks but that DBS checks were not always possible where an interpreter was new to the country as there was insufficient evidence to obtain this. He added that where such interpreters were employed they would always be accompanied. Members queried the rationale in employing such interpreters. The Head of Strategic Communications advised this was not common; and only arose where the language was rare and the service could not otherwise provide an interpreter for that language. Officers explained that the service did carry out its own assessment in addition to DBS checks and agreed to supply further information on this to members of the Committee.

In response to a member's query regarding customer feedback the Head of Strategic Communications explained that this was sought in a variety of ways including informal feedback following each session and more formal processes including an end of year report.

Members sought clarification on the charges and the Communications Support Services Manager confirmed the Council charged £150 for 1000 words. In response to a further query he added that the amount of words was calculated based on the document that was subject to translation. He said that the charge included the costs of the translation itself, proof reading and quality control checks.

Members asked how the service was advertised, whether they could help with this, and whether they had capacity for more work. The Head of Strategic Communications responded that the service was promoted amongst relevant networks and groups rather than traditional adverts. She said that in Greater Manchester only a few Councils still retained their own translations service. She added that the Council's Customer Service Centre also offered a walk in service. The Communications Support Service Manager explained that this often involved translating written documents including proof of identity, autopsy reports or greetings cards.

Decisions:

1. To request that the Head of Strategic Communications supply information on the assessment carried out by M4 Translations in addition to the DBS check.
2. To thank officers and note the report

CESC/16/09 Libraries

The Committee received a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Growth and Neighbourhoods) which provided members with an overview of the vision, strategy and service developments for Manchester Libraries over the past ten years and advised on future developments and priorities across the service. The report provided information on participation and engagement with Manchester residents and insight into some of the key targeted services and the universal services delivered across the city to residents of all ages. The Executive Member for Culture and Leisure praised the way libraries had become community hubs despite pressures to cut the budgets. The Strategic Lead – Libraries, Galleries and Culture introduced the report across its main themes. He then shared a short video with the Committee to introduce the report.

Members held a detailed discussion regarding libraries. A member commented that the facility at Platt Lane was a fantastic success and asked whether community libraries and the neighbourhood focus they brought was a future priority for the Council. The Strategic Lead confirmed it was and offered to provide more information on this. The Chair requested that the update be included within a future report entitled 'Our Manchester'. Members also asked about the plans to improve libraries. The Strategic Lead described the hub and spoke model used by libraries, how libraries were subject to review as part of the Neighbourhood Service re-design, and that only a small proportion of Manchester libraries were stand-alone libraries. He described some current developments, for example Newton Heath Library was about to start external improvement works, Withington Library was considering how they could use space differently, and Gorton Library were considering a makeover and how the building could be used outside of traditional opening hours.

In response to a member's query the Strategic Lead advised that the website Google were offering 'Google Digital Garage' support to businesses through Central Library until very recently; and that he was currently considering options to replace this going forward.

Members discussed staff training and the use of volunteers in libraries. The Strategic Lead explained there had been a strong emphasis on training following service re-design and confirmed that safeguarding was a key element of this. He added that libraries worked closely with key colleagues across the Council in Children, Youth and Adult Services to share information and best practice.

Members asked for more information about active library users including the provision of ward level data to ward co-ordination meetings. The Strategic Lead explained that active users referred only to users who had activated their library card by borrowing an item. He added that this information was available at ward level and he could provide this to members, to which members agreed. The Strategic Lead explained a survey was planned for the autumn which would include more detail on library usage; and data on ward, ethnicity, and gender.

A member stressed the importance of history and of having an adequate archive service. The Citywide Services Manager explained that Manchester had one of the best library services in the UK and operated an exemplar archive service. He

described initiatives such as the British Library national project 'Saving our Sounds' and the potential for Manchester to become a North-West hub for oral history which could bring additional resource. He added that libraries were producing toolkits for community groups, providing training and support, and working closely with the heritage lottery fund. The Chair added that she had worked with Archive Plus on heritage lottery funded projects and her experience was very good.

Members asked whether more could be done to promote the diverse services offered by Manchester Libraries. The Strategic Lead described the work undertaken to develop a Communications Strategy for Manchester Libraries and explained that library members could sign up to an e-bulletin to receive news and information on events in libraries. He added that it was important not to overload people with information adding that libraries also tried to work with partners to include information in their publications. In response to a members query regarding increasing the frequency of the Customer Survey the Strategic Lead explained he was investigating the use of improved technology as an alternative as this would be quicker and less resource intensive

The Chair requested more information on the Royal National Institute of Blind people (RNIB) six steps programme. The Citywide Services Manager said that he would like to provide a future update to the Committee following key events throughout the year. He added that it was planned to integrate the RNIB's e-book offer and their library catalogue with the Manchester libraries catalogue.

A member noted that as the remit of libraries had expanded to be about more than just borrowing items it was more important than ever that staff received adequate training. The Strategic Lead explained that the Citywide Services Manager was currently carrying out a workforce development review, and stressed that rather than staff being experts in every service they needed to be aware of the services offered and how to access them. In response to a members request for further information on support from library staff on benefit applications and validations the Strategic Lead confirmed these requests had increased and offered to supply further information to the Committee on this, to which they agreed.

The Executive Member for Culture and Leisure advised the Council was currently working to produce a strategy for volunteering across different sectors; which would include volunteering within libraries.

Decisions:

1. To note the report
2. To request that a future update on community libraries and neighbourhood focus be included within the scope of a future report scheduled entitled 'Our Manchester'.
3. To provide an update on Manchester Libraries once the National Library Strategy has been completed
4. To request information on active users be provided to members at ward level

CESC/16/10 All Age Disability Strategy

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director – Adult Social Care which alongside the attached ‘All-age Disability Strategy - Equality, Accessibility and Inclusion: Access All Areas’ set out the new directions for Manchester to become a Disabled People Friendly City. The strategy will be formally launched in August 2016; along with the establishment of the Partnership Board and the Engagement Group. The report gives an overview of the recent consultation, key findings and how the first draft strategy has changed to incorporate the feedback.

The Executive Member for Adult Health and Wellbeing commented that the strategy had been developed over the previous two years and commended the work of the Chair and officers in driving the strategy forward. The Chair of the Committee was also Lead Member for Disability. The Committee welcomed the Lead Commissioner for Disability and Older People, Jon Burke (formerly of Manchester Disabled Peoples Access Group (MDPAG) and the Commissioning Manager. The Lead Commissioner apologised for the late submission of the actual strategy; which was delayed in the production studio. She advised that the cover report detailed the changes which had been made since the Committee last considered the strategy and officers would talk members through the changes that had been made. The Lead Commissioner thanked Jon Burke for his input into the strategy and explained how he had become involved in its production. Jon Burke then outlined some of the key aspects of the consultation findings. There had been 89 responses to the consultation of which approximately 80-90% of respondents agreed to the suggestions made. He said there was overwhelming support for the strategy to be based on the social model of disability.

The Commissioning Manager explained the team had worked closely with disabled people’s organisations; with a strong focus on co-production. He explained that references to adult social care had been removed from the front cover of the strategy as it is not representative of all people who have a disability that they receive a social care service. In respect of the Partnership Board he explained that feedback was received suggesting that the Chair should be independent and alternative options would be explored. The current Chair commented that she was agreeable to this. The Commissioning Manager explained that how the strategy could be resourced in future was currently being explored; and the possibility of external funding was being considered. He described some of the changes that had been made as a result of the consultation including changing the wording from ‘disability friendly city’ to ‘disabled people friendly city’. He said that recognition needed to be given to marginalised groups within the city including those from Black, Minority, Ethnic (BME) backgrounds, Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual and Transgender, and those with mental health needs. He added that the role of carers had been reviewed following feedback as not all disabled people had carers.

The Chair noted that online consultation was not the only method used and lots of focus groups had contributed to the development of the strategy. She asked what the next steps would be and whether a timeframe was in place for these. The Lead Commissioner advised that the strategy would be launched online in July with a launch event planned for August which would include a ‘call for action’ from disabled mancanians. She noted that photographs were missing from the strategy and said

that options currently being considered included a photography competition. She explained that the partnership board would follow this, ideally in September 2016.

Members offered to share their experiences with officers. A member who was the Lead member for Valuing Older People noted parallels with the age friendly initiative and described their links with the World Health Organisation (WHO) who had awarded Manchester 'age friendly city' status. Another member advised she had worked on the photography competition run for the homelessness charter. Members were interested to know how the work of the strategy could be developed further; and how different groups could become engaged with the strategy.

Jon Burke described how the strategy linked into other broader strategies including 'Our Manchester' (the Manchester Strategy). He said consideration would be given to enter a competition to be the most accessible city in Europe. The Chair welcomed this. He described the links with the age friendly initiative and how their experiences had been used to inform the development of the strategy. He added they had provided useful feedback to the recent consultation exercise. The Lead Commissioner added that because of the strong focus on co-production in developing the strategy not as much time had been spent as she would have liked benchmarking their work with other cities. She added that she had received lots of interest in the 'all age' aspects of the strategy from other local authorities and would develop benchmarking further in future. A member that was the Lead member for Valuing Older People commented that disability was a global phenomenon and noted the links between Manchester and New York in terms of the age friendly initiative. The Chair, who was also the Lead member for Disabilities noted the barriers faced by disabled people accessing public transport were similar internationally and described some of the work she was involved in with Transport for Greater Manchester (TFGM).

The Lead Commissioner explained how different groups had become or would become engaged with the strategy. She said that the Partnership Board would oversee the work of the strategy but that lots of subgroups would contribute to this. She assured members that this would include the private sector, the Chamber of Commerce, the hospitality industry and young people. She added that she worked closely with the Director of Education and Skills who was required by legislation to have regard to young people's engagement in disability matters. She added that the partnership board would lead on further engagement in order to ensure ownership which members welcomed

Members discussed hidden disabilities including autism and how these could be addressed. The Lead commissioner explained the Council had carried out a lot of work around autism which the Health Scrutiny Committee monitored on a regular basis. She added that now the all age disability strategy was complete further work could commence to promote this and to see how it best fit into complementary strategies and processes. In response to members' queries regarding training and promoting awareness the Lead Commissioner explained the Partnership Board would take ownership for this. Jon Burke described the ways in which different issues could be addressed and said the word 'access' and the strategy itself was about a lot more than simply steps and wheelchairs.

Decisions:

1. To thank officers for attending
2. To note that the strategy would be provided to all members once it is formally launched
3. To note that feedback can be provided to the Chair and/or officers present at the meeting
4. To note that a presentation will be delivered at Full Council on 13 July 2016 on the 'Disability History Month'.

CESC/16/11 Overview Report

A report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit was submitted. The overview report contained key decisions within the Committee's remit, responses to previous recommendations and the Committee's work programmed.

The Chair noted that the work programme had been updated to reflect members' suggestions from the work programming session. She requested that if any members wanted to make comment on the updated work programme to do so where possible within the next 10 days.

The 'All Age Disability Strategy' had been issued under a supplementary agenda as the information was not available.

The Committee was asked to approve the work programme.

Decision:

To note the overview report and to agree the work programme.