
**Manchester City Council
Report for Resolution**

Report to: Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee – 7 September 2016

Subject: Our Manchester

Report of: Deputy Chief Executive (Growth and Neighbourhoods)

Summary

This report was requested by Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee to provide an update on the development of Our Manchester including an update on Libraries following on from the previous committee meeting. Information is also included on the Parks Strategy, the consultation for which was undertaken using an Our Manchester approach.

Recommendations

Members of the Committee are asked to note and comment upon the report

Wards Affected: All

Contact Officers:

Name: Sara Todd
Position: Deputy Chief Executive (Growth and Neighbourhoods)
Telephone: 0161 234 3286
E-mail: s.todd@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Suzanne Grimshaw
Position: Reform & Innovation Manager (Our Manchester)
Telephone: 0161 274 8478
Email: s.grimshaw@manchester.gov.uk

Background documents (available for public inspection):

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy please contact one of the contact officers above.

NONE

1.0 Introduction

This report was requested by Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee to provide an update on the development of Our Manchester including an update on Libraries following on from the previous committee meeting.

1.1 Our Manchester Strategy – Background

In January 2016, the Council approved the adoption of the Manchester Strategy 2016 – 2025. The Strategy, now known as the Our Manchester Strategy, provides the overarching framework and priorities for action by the Council and partners from all sectors over the next 10 years, replacing the 2005 Community Strategy.

The development of the Our Manchester Strategy was overseen by the Manchester Leaders Forum, a partnership of over 40 people who represent the public, private and voluntary sectors within Manchester. The Forum engaged widely over an 18 month period to ensure that the Strategy reflected the realities and ambitions of the city. This process also included a review of the evidence base, assessing the progress of the previous 10 years.

In July 2015, the Executive agreed a draft Strategy for consultation. The consultation attracted over 2,300 contributions from people and organisations which is the largest response that the Council has had to a consultation process. The campaign had high visibility due to its large social media presence, with Facebook and Twitter material reaching over 440,000 people.

In summary the key messages that came out from the consultation were that people want Manchester to be a city that's:

- Thriving – creating great jobs and healthy businesses
- Filled with talent – both home-grown and attracting the world's best
- Fair – with equal chances for all to unlock their potential
- A great place to live – with lots of things to do
- Buzzing with connections – from world class transport to brilliant broadband

1.2 Our Manchester – Background

The Our Manchester Strategy sets out **what** we all want Manchester to be and the next step is to work out **how**, together, the people and organisations of Manchester can all make it happen.

Whilst Manchester in 2016 is a very different place than it was back in 2005 having made great progress, some of the same challenges remain not least the poor health of our citizens. Furthermore, austerity means that there is a great deal less funding available than there was ten years ago. It therefore follows that delivering the ambitions set out in the Strategy is going to require radical change both to the way the Council works but also to the way partners, residents and businesses work together. No one person or organisation can do

this alone. Everybody and every organisation that cares for Manchester has their part to play.

Our Manchester is the new approach being adopted to underpin delivery the Strategy; a fundamental set of changes to the way in which the Council and partners currently operate. Like with the Strategy, partners, stakeholders, the voluntary community sector and staff are being invited to join in with the development and implementation of Our Manchester.

Our Manchester is rooted in an 'ethnographic approach', a concept taken from Anthropology, which places people at the centre. Wigan have been working in this way for four years and call this way of working their 'Deal'. It has enabled some impressive outcomes to be delivered for services, communities and individuals. To summarise, Our Manchester:

- requires a 'blank mind' – we don't make assumptions about people by viewing them through service-specific lenses but listen to them
- uses an asset-based approach – we focus on the strengths and what people can do, not what they can't, to bring about positive change
- requires deeper conversations and engagement with local communities, partners and staff to establish what matters to them
- will require significant organisation change to allow services to refocus on enabling and empowering communities, giving staff the space to think and act creatively

The Council and partners are already undertaking work in a number of areas which embody an Our Manchester approach. Age Friendly Manchester is probably the longest standing example where the focus is on the positive contribution that older people can make to the city rather than assuming they are all vulnerable and in need of services which can sometimes be the perception.

1.3 Our Manchester – Conversations to Date

Over the last few months, the Council and partners have been exploring how an Our Manchester approach could be developed in the city. This has involved a number of activities:

- Six Our Manchester one day Workshops have been held between March and June, with 208 people attending, including some Members and officers, partners, voluntary and community sector groups and a small number of residents. These workshops aimed to give attendees a deeper understanding of the theoretical ideas underpinning Our Manchester, and stimulated discussions on behaviours needed to successfully adopt an Our Manchester approach and what activity could be part of this
- Three Listening in Action staff engagement sessions were held in June, with a total of 223 staff attending. The sessions aimed to provide a relaxed and open environment for staff to hear from the Council's senior political leaders and officer about their priorities for the future, to pose questions and to

contribute to and help shape this work. Central to this was the opportunity to find out about and contribute to the development of Our Manchester. A further six sessions are planned for September and October, several of which will take place in localities.

- A wide range of meetings and conversations about Our Manchester across the city have been undertaken with various stakeholders. These have included discussions about how the Our Manchester approach can be taken forward to develop a shared understanding of what this will look like practically.
- A further four Our Manchester Workshops are planned for September and October, including sessions for Members.

1.4 Our Manchester Next Steps

From all of the discussions undertaken to date, participants identified some key tasks that need to help develop the Our Manchester approach in the city:

1. A clear **Framework for Our Manchester** – all agreed that a simple and clear narrative, alongside a set of principles and behaviours should be developed to help everyone understand what Our Manchester is, who is involved and how it can be delivered. Some work has started on this framework, drawing on all the discussions set out above.
2. A next stage **Communication and Engagement Plan** - the initial approach to engagement and the first workshops have helped to set the tone for future activity. The ‘big conversation’ about this new way of working together and what it could achieve has certainly started, but it is recognised that this is just the beginning of that conversation. There is a continuing need to engage all stakeholders in what Our Manchester could mean for them and their role, their service or organisation and their community and how collectively we support its development. This next phase of engagement activity will focus on capturing the enthusiasm and commitment across all partners, giving consideration as to how residents including young people are engaged, continuing to develop the shared understanding of Our Manchester and shaping the initial framework of activity
3. **Phase One Activity** – everyone agreed that it is important that we start working in an Our Manchester way straight away, building on some of the excellent work that is going on now as well as identifying new activity which can get underway quickly. This, in effect will be ‘learning by doing’ and we are calling it Phase One of Our Manchester. There are a number of activities underway or under discussion already – early help assessments of families starting to experience problems using a strengths based approach, work involving residents in future plans for Benchill being led by Wythenshawe Community Housing Group and the start of work to co-design the way the Council provides funding to the voluntary and community sector are just three examples.

This year the Budget Consultation is being delivered taking an Our Manchester approach and using a variety of additional options that support increased engagement, both online and offline. This approach sets the tone for the Council's new way of working and provides the opportunity to have a fuller conversation with all stakeholders so that they are truly part of the budget setting process; using the three-year budget strategy as opportunity to focus on helping people and communities to connect growth. The communication and engagement activity has been designed so that it is strengths-based. This approach allows all stakeholders to tell the Council not just what they value but also what they can offer, in terms of ideas and help in meeting the challenges and opportunities ahead. It has also been designed to be inclusive, supporting the diverse make-up of the city, ensuring that anyone who wants to participate can. Throughout the process we have considered time and how important it is to take the time to have quality conversations, to understand what is being proposed and what impact their involvement has had.

Two further examples of Phase One activity that fall within the Committee's remit – the Parks Strategy Consultation and Libraries – are set out below:

2.0 Parks Strategy Consultation

The Parks Strategy consultation took place earlier this year taking an 'Our Manchester' approach. The focus was to encourage everyone to 'join in the conversation' rather than 'be consulted' about the future for parks in the city looking ahead for the next 10 years.

The consultation started on 7th March and some of the headlines include:

- A campaign via **Social Media** (nearly 180,000 hits on Facebook and 74,000 followers on Twitter by the end)
- **On-line questionnaires** to test the Strategy's Vision and Themes, demographic data, regular users of our parks and non-user, to capture ideas for the future and to set a baseline of our parks in 2016
- **Hard copy questionnaires** for users of our parks without access to the on-line version and there were examples of groups with English as a second language coming together to translate the questionnaire to have a say in the future of their park and green spaces
- **Face-to-Face** workshops across the city in our parks with Friends Groups, stakeholders, interested groups and individual.
- **Written Submissions** from especially interested groups and organisations
- Additional coverage in the **Press** and through **Radio** activity to get to harder to reach additional park users/non users.

The success of this consultation has demonstrated how important Parks are to residents but also the impact that can be made by having a different conversation.

There was an underlying enthusiasm in the feedback from our residents wanting to actively contribute to their green spaces and seeing the role of the Council

moving towards an enabler/facilitator unlocking opportunities for improvement. It was recognised that there are pockets of excellent practice at sites like Parsonage Gardens where initial investment in to the fabric and infrastructure has enabled volunteers to undertake the day to day maintenance of the Park and that this activity has potential to be replicated across the Parks' portfolio by working with our Friends and stakeholder groups and to activate those 49% of all respondents to the Park Strategy consultation that have pledged their support to the Cities' Parks.

3.0 Our Manchester – Our Libraries

- 3.1 The principles of the Our Manchester approach have actually underpinned the Library Strategy over the past ten years when the service decided never to build another stand-alone library in the city. The vast majority of our neighbourhood libraries now operate as joint service centres and are vibrant local hubs supporting a range of partners, community organisations and groups, as well as other public sector services and agencies including both local and national government.
- 3.2 Three of our libraries are now joint libraries and leisure centres promoting healthy minds and bodies and each of those has seen a significant increase in use since coming together. Two libraries are co-located with Manchester Adult Education Service, The Manchester College share a site in Harpurhey, Academies are our partners in Beswick and Brooklands and our first transformed library completed 2003 is the Forum Library in Wythenshawe which shares a site with a number of partners.
- 3.3 There are now just five stand-alone libraries – Gorton, Withington, Didsbury, Chorlton and Newton Heath – and there are active plans to maximise the potential for greater shared use of these buildings with key partners, and to enable increased use at all of our neighbourhood libraries outside of traditional library opening hours.
- 3.4 The library transformation programme has also been supported by better systems, new technologies and a range of customer focussed service improvements. This form of channel shift is cost effective, convenient and empowering for customers who want easier, faster access to information, library resources and the ability to manage their library accounts online. The library website is a key part of the service with access to 24 hour resources, local and family history material and ebooks for loan. We have recently introduced an e-magazines service which in its first month had over 1,400 issues. Wi-Fi has been introduced at all libraries across the city and a mobile phone library app is available.
- 3.5 Manchester Libraries, Information and Archives have, over the past three years, been developing new relationships with communities and partners to look at sustainable solutions and models to support Manchester Libraries, with a particular focus on those libraries which operate outside of our statutory provision, namely our community partnership libraries. The community partnership libraries have evolved by taking a strength based approach,

listening to our residents and what matters to them and responding, celebrating success and ultimately enabling more activity in some of those venues.

- 3.6 More people are volunteering and becoming involved in community life through libraries and archives and this is also helping to widen the range of services on offer and to secure others. Over 300 volunteers, provided over 18,000 hours of volunteering, which enables us to make the best use of the resources available within the city. There is a rich mixture of volunteers and volunteer opportunities ranging from young people (age 13+) who are our Reading Hack volunteers, students, residents looking for experience to support job seeking, retired residents and those who just want to share, support and meet fellow residents in their communities. We now have over a dozen volunteer opportunities including storytelling, digital and IT support, homework support, meet and greet plus many more.
- 3.7 Our Community Partnership libraries have been developed over the past three years with the support of partners, primarily housing providers and operate with the support of volunteers. In addition, the library service continues to provide at least 15 hours of staff time per week at each, with book stock remaining as part of the overall citywide provision of support. Volunteers at each are also provided with training and support from the library service.

3.7.1 Fallowfield – The Place at Platt Lane Community Library and Resource Centre.

One Manchester has worked with the local community to establish a Community Interest Company. The building has been refurbished in partnership with One Manchester and Manchester Libraries and now hosts new community meeting rooms, which offer a range of activities and services for local people. Renamed *The Place at Platt Lane*, the library is open to the public 15 hours per week, however, the place now has community activities running from it seven days a week.

The library has successfully recruited a significant number of volunteers, who do a minimum of 3 hours per week, and these help with story time, the homework club, Age Friendly Manchester offers and numerous craft groups. Over ninety children joined the Summer Reading Challenge in 2015, with the majority completing the challenge.

- 3.7.2 Miles Platting.* This library operates from the Victoria Mill Community Centre, and opens for 15 hours per week over four days. Local residents are always popping in to use our 'drop-in' computers and there is a weekly Tiny Tot and Toddler Time Sessions for babies, toddlers and pre-school children. A community artist funded by Adactus Housing will provide weekly creativity sessions, well loved by local children.

- 3.7.3 New Moston.* This Library is open for 15 hours across 4 days. The 'Drop-in' Computers are always busy, over the Summer Holidays children aged 4 – 11 years participated with the Summer Reading Challenge and we devised weekly crafts to support this National project. There are 3 Outreach Volunteers, 2 volunteers on a Friday and a volunteer assists every Saturday

afternoon. Central Manchester University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust leases the whole building and enables the community partnership library service to be delivered from a section of the building.

- 3.7.4 *Northenden*. The library operates from a ground floor space at the Wythenshawe Community Housing Group offices on Palatine Road. It is open 15 hours a week with support from 7 volunteers. In October 2015, the Friends of Northenden Community Library Community Group was formed by volunteers from the library with the view to raising money to deliver a wide variety of activities to all age groups in Northenden. Regular activities include a weekly story session for toddlers and a monthly books club
- 3.7.5 *Burnage*. The library now runs in partnership with Southway Housing and the Friends of Burnage Library (FOBL), and is open 21 hours a week. 40 volunteers help support the running of the library, with over 1000 volunteer hours contributed April-August 2015. Activities include weekly story time sessions for toddlers, weekly local history groups for over 50s, digital drop in sessions, a Code Club and Book Club. With Clean City funding, Southway, FOBL and the City Council have put in raised flower beds and plants for the library garden.
- 3.7.6 *Barlow Moor*. The community library has a dedicated space within the recently built Barlow Moor Community association building, and is open 18 hours a week, including Saturday mornings, with 7 volunteers supporting the service. Regular activity includes storytime and craft sessions.

4.0 Conclusion

To date, there has been a strong sense from everyone involved that Our Manchester is the beginning of a very exciting journey to develop a new approach to working with citizens, communities and businesses in our city. The overwhelming feedback from the sessions and conversations provides a sense of commitment and enthusiasm to this asset or strengths based approach. It is important that we now build on this engagement and enthusiasm to develop this way of working across the Council, our partners and in our communities in order to deliver the vision and commitments in the Our Manchester Strategy. This is a ten year journey and Our Manchester needs to become 'the way we do things around here'.