

Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2016

Present:

Councillor Rawlins - In the Chair
Councillors Ahmed Ali, Alijah, Cookson, Fletcher- Hackwood, Grimshaw, Hassan, Madeleine Monaghan, and Sharif Mahamed

Councillor S Murphy, Deputy Leader
Councillor Flanagan, Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources
Councillor Rahman, Executive Member for Culture and Leisure

Richard Lister, Group Head of Income and Financial Inclusion, One Manchester
Nigel Wilson, Wythenshawe Community Housing
Barbara J. Guest, Centre Manager, Cheetham Hill Advice Centre (CHAC)
John Ryan, HUB Manager, Shelter
Andy Brown, Chief Executive Officer, Citizens Advice Manchester
Hayley Hughes, Shelter
Alice Umuhoza, Volunteer, Citizens Advice Manchester

Apologies: Councillors Cooley and Knowles

CESC/16/23 Minutes

Decision:

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2016 as a correct record.

CESC/16/24 Budget Process 2017-2020: Update and Next Steps

The Committee received a report of the City Treasurer which provided an overview of the budget process to date and the next steps, including details of the Budget Conversation which closed on 16 September. The Committee were asked to note and comment on the activity, engagement and feedback received as part of the Budget Conversation; and note and comment on the next phase of the process, including the second phase of Budget consultation proposals and next steps. The Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources informed the Committee that a report will be submitted to the November meeting that will present savings options. The Director of Neighbourhoods introduced the report across its main themes; described the process and outlined the key milestones.

The Chair welcomed the increased timescale for debating the Council's budget and the improved opportunities for resident engagement. The Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources agreed adding that more contacts from the public were received in this budget consultation so far than in previous years over the entire budget process. He encouraged members to suggest ways resident engagement could be improved. A member suggested that the Council use Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) specific media. The Director of Neighbourhoods advised she would

check whether this was done. Members emphasised the importance of face to face contact. In response to a member's query the Director confirmed that a range of communication methods and formats were used.

The Chair welcomed the high response rate from females. She asked whether the numbers of staff consulted with were lower than expected. The Director of Neighbourhoods responded that a comprehensive programme of engagement with staff was in place. She added that many employees would have responded to the budget conversation as residents of the city; and therefore not necessarily using their work email address. Members were advised that all staff were briefed on the content of the budget papers over the past few days; and it had been made clear to all staff that they were able to participate in the formal consultation. A member added that trade unions should also be consulted.

Decision:

1. To note the report and welcome the improved approach to consulting with residents.
2. To urge Executive to value the importance of face to face contact when consulting with residents.
3. To note the importance of encouraging all stakeholders to participate in the consultation process, including staff and trade unions.

CESC/16/25 Annual Economic and Social Impact on Culture Report

The Committee received a report of report of the Director of Culture, which detailed the economic and social impact of cultural organisations in Manchester. The Director of Culture introduced the report across its main themes. She described the rationale that had led to the decision to commission Ekosgen to produce the report and advised she would focus on the social impact.

A member asked whether it was possible to break down the visitor data to include ethnic background and class. Another member requested that the information on volunteers be similarly broken down. The Director confirmed it was and offered to provide this information to members of the Committee, to which members agreed. In response to a member's query regarding decreased engagement in more affluent areas the Director responded that it was a mixed picture both within wards and across the city. She added that the information within the report was shared with arts organisations in order to encourage them to target particular activities, raise awareness, or identify any barriers to engagement such as transport links or the absence of a school which was effective at promoting cultural activities. A member advised that many members sat on governing bodies of schools and recommended that the information be provided to all members to share within their networks. Members agreed that members should be informed where activities are planned for their wards. The Director welcomed the recommendation. The Director clarified that it was often not active resistance which prevented effective engagement; but sometimes a lack of awareness of the benefits of engagement.

Members asked how engagement could be improved, particularly amongst the working class and those of different ethnic backgrounds. Members agreed that Manchester was both a world class city and a city of great diversity; which needed to be celebrated. The Director advised that galleries and museums in Manchester served all classes and ethnicities and described activities which illustrated this including the Pakistani celebrations. She noted that galleries and museums in Manchester were free to enter which encouraged those less affluent to attend. A member enquired whether free tickets or discounts were available for activities such as the Manchester International Festival (MIF). The Director explained that free tickets had been given in the past, but the festival needed to cover its costs. She said that in 2017 MIF was prioritising its work with local cultural and arts organisations to encourage them to participate in the festival. In response to queries the Director described the activities of the Widening Access Board whose membership included the Executive Member for Culture and Leisure and Council Officers and was identifying ways to improve access to galleries and museums. Members expressed interest in this and suggested the membership be widened. The Director advised the board was still in its early stages and noted that widening its membership may result in duplication. She described the remit and activities of the Cultural Partnership Board, of which she was Chair, and which included a broader membership including faith and community groups.

Decisions:

1. To request that the Director of Culture provide the information within the report on visitors and volunteers broken down by ethnicity and class to members of the Committee.
2. To request that the report be shared with all members in order for them to share with their networks and encourage participation. To request that members are informed where activities are planned for their wards.
3. To request a future report at an appropriate time, to include those efforts taken to widen access and encourage participation within museums and galleries.

CESC/16/26 Advice, Information and Guidance

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director, Adults Social Care which was in two parts. Part One provided an overview of advice services within the city detailing the range of provision and the required outcomes of those contracts which the Council commissions. It included the pressures for all advice providers in serving Manchester's population and explained the offer that other advice providers give, including the Council's retained advice service, the Gateway Debt Advice and Money Education Centre and Registered Providers (of housing) provision. The Strategic Lead Commissioner introduced Part One of the report across its main themes.

A number of guests were invited to the meeting. The Committee welcomed Richard Lister (Group Head of Income and Financial Inclusion, One Manchester), Nigel Wilson (Wythenshawe Community Housing), Barbara J. Guest (Centre Manager, Cheetham Hill Advice Centre (CHAC)), John Ryan (HUB Manager, Shelter) and Hayley Hughes (Citizens Advice Manchester), Andy Brown (Chief Executive Officer,

Citizens Advice Manchester) and Alice Umuhoza (Volunteer, Citizens Advice Manchester). The Chair invited the guests to outline their experiences of delivering advice services within the city.

Richard Lister said that One Manchester was an established social landlord following stock transfer from the Council. One Manchester offered a range of advice, information and guidance services around health and wellbeing, employment and volunteering, and financial resilience; which was provided from five offices and two hubs. A triage service had recently been introduced which resolved 40% of queries at the first point of contact with the remainder being dealt with as casework. Case work covered a wide variety of problems, with people often presenting with multiple issues primarily debt and benefits. Richard Lister added that they tried to link financial advice with employment advice and that they supported a number of projects including welfare reform and food and fuel poverty.

Barbara Guest advised she was the manager of Cheetham Hill Advice Centre which had been in operation approximately 39 years. It was initially established to meet the advice support needs of residents in Cheetham Hill and Crumpsall but had now extended to serve beyond this. They were based in Cheetham Hill with a particular focus on face to face advice. They aimed to build the capabilities of individuals and organisations, for example they provided a volunteer programme to train local residents who were often bilingual to provide support to others and help them move into employment. Members were advised that 26% of their volunteers over the preceding twelve months had now moved into employment. Barbara Guest said Cheetham Hill Advice Centre also helped to build capabilities within other organisations delivering outreach services in 5 locations and offering consultancy services to support organisations to train their own volunteers.

Andy Brown from Citizens Advice Manchester welcomed the opportunity to be involved in the consultation process regarding advice services. He explained they were an advice partnership offering innovative solutions in health and social care, assisted digital employability and welfare reform. He said they were helping people to overcome the barriers to work by offering volunteering opportunities and was accompanied by a volunteer Alice Umuhoza who applied to become a trainee when she became unemployed. Alice Umuhoza described her experiences with Citizens Advice Manchester adding that it was very positive and she was attracted by the training program they offered.

Nigel Wilson from Wythenshawe Community Housing explained that they employed a team of eight people to deliver advice services with a budget of £300K despite the government imposing a 1% rent cut on social landlords. He stressed the need to support tenants with issues including employment, training and skills to create sustainable tenancies. He advised there was a lot of uncertainty about future proposals to change benefits which would affect tenants including the benefits cap. He added it was encouraging that everyone was working collaboratively and welcomed the 'Our Manchester' approach.

John Ryan from Shelter stressed that everyone should have a place to call home. He said that a lot of people's lives were on hold because of issues like debt and housing issues. He explained that Shelter worked in partnership with other

organisations across the city to provide advice via telephone, face-to-face, and digital access and whilst they received funding from the Council as a national organisation they also brought a additional funding to the city. John Ryan explained he was accompanied by Hayley Hughes who described a real life case study where Citizens Advice Manchester had defended possession proceedings on behalf of a client, preventing their homelessness.

Members were concerned that further proposed benefit cuts to residents within the city would impact heavily on them and increase the demand for advice services. The Strategic Lead Commissioner confirmed that those who had already seen their benefits capped would be capped again on 7 November 2016; and those that met the criteria that had not been previously been subject to a benefit cap would be capped in January 2017. She described the efforts the Council had made to work with both advice agencies and Registered Providers to support residents through this process. In response to a member's query regarding Table 1 within the report the Strategic Lead Commissioner responded that these were the key categories which had seen an increase in demand. In response to a member's query regarding the Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit (GMIAU) she said that they were not included within the report as the report focussed on more generic services; but confirmed that the Council did provide funding. She offered to provide further information in a future update.

Members welcomed the report, in particular the information about advice offered by Registered Providers within the city as part of a family of advice services. The Chair noted that when the Committee had considered advice services previously members were concerned that there may be potential for a conflict of interests; for example a Registered Provider offering debt advice where a tenant was in rent arrears. Nigel Wilson responded that each case was dealt with on its own merits and they adopted a sensible approach. He added that sometimes people may choose not to disclose all of their information; or they could choose to use a different advice provider.

Members discussed the different types of support available and commented that there were sometimes queues outside Cheetham Hill Advice Centre. Barbara Guest responded that this demonstrated the demand for continued face-to-face provision adding that often advice workers needed to see documents. She explained that some clients preferred this type of service, for example those with mental health issues. Members agreed it was important to have a range of types of service available.

Members noted that many clients may be repeat clients and discussed what providers were doing to build the capacity of those individuals. Nigel Wilson explained that it was important to challenge the culture of dependency and support individuals to help themselves.

In response to a member's query regarding the 1-3-12 model the Deputy Leader responded this was an emerging model within health and social care. She advised it referred to 1 city, 3 areas, and 12 neighbourhoods. The aim was to get services working effectively across a geographical location to ensure commonality of boundaries.

The Deputy Leader introduced Part 2 of the report which focused on a number of initiatives and the support given to the voluntary and community sector. It discussed the new approach being developed in partnership with the voluntary sector to commission and fund a number of voluntary sector contracts and grants. It also updated members on the new co-designed monitoring process, the work undertaken with Macc to support the Voluntary and Community Sector, and provided information on how the Council measures social value and the Community Asset Transfer process. The Deputy Leader outlined the partnership approach to the future funding of the Voluntary and Community Sector; and noted that some organisations received funding from different funding streams. She added that a small group were working on the detail of co-design and offered to provide a future update to the Committee, to which members agreed.

Members discussed Community Asset Transfer and expressed great interest in this area. Members asked who was responsible for maintaining those buildings subject to Community Asset Transfer, what the lease conditions were and how risk was considered and managed. Members said they would like more detail on those transfers that had taken place and suggested case studies be provided and guests be invited to talk about their experiences. The Deputy Leader explained that every case was unique and welcomed the call for case studies. She explained that the liabilities for repair of the property would pass to the organisation it transferred to as part of the arrangement but that the amount of money payable for the rent or lease was dependent on the individual case. She added that this process was intended for buildings already used by community groups or buildings owned by the Council that it had no use for with the aim of enabling their meaningful use. The Deputy Leader said it had to be a robust process and the government had provided funding to facilitate this when it was first introduced. She added that it was also a complex process and that as many applicants had decided not to proceed as had decided to proceed. Members agreed to request a future update specifically on Community Asset Transfer. The Chair requested that the report be written in plain English and include case studies of both successful and unsuccessful applications. She added that she would like to see a draft version of the report prior to publication.

Decisions:

1. To request a future report on the outcomes of the co-production process with the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) to develop a new grants process at an appropriate time.
2. To request a future in-depth report on Community Asset Transfer. To include the process, detailed case studies of those that have and haven't proceeded, information on organisations that have completed the process. To invite organisations to talk about their experiences at the meeting where this is considered.

CESC/16/27 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 programme.

The Chair advised that the Park Strategy was deferred until December and that in November an update on the proposed changes to Greater Manchester Police would be provided in place of the Community Safety Overview.

A member noted that for some voluntary work was mandatory, for example Community Service and asked whether this could be included in one of the volunteer reports.

The Chair told members she had visited the Spirit of Manchester Awards organised by Macc the previous week and how it brought to life some of the issues members had been discussing. She recommended that all members attend next year.

The Budget report was received late as all Budget reports had been published simultaneously. The report on the Annual Social and Economic Impact of Culture had been received late but the reason has not yet been confirmed.

Decision:

To note the overview report and to agree the work programme subject to the above additions.