

Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2016

Present:

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

Councillor S Murphy, Deputy Leader
Councillor N Murphy, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods
Councillor Rahman, Executive Member for Culture and Leisure

Sheena Wrigley, Executive Director, HOME
Superintendent Arif Nawaz, Greater Manchester Police

Apologies: Councillors Alijah, Cookson and Knowles

CESC/16/28 Minutes

Decision:

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2016 as a correct record.

CESC/16/29 Accessibility of Venues

The Committee received a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Growth and Neighbourhoods) and the Strategic Director (Development) which provided information on activities and work that was being and had been progressed to ensure that venues and buildings across the city were accessible to all. The Director of Neighbourhoods introduced the report across its main themes. The Committee welcomed Sheena Wrigley, Executive Director of HOME.

A member expressed concern that the information in the report differed from what disabled people had told her about their experience of venue accessibility. Members also questioned what the Council could do to improve accessibility of non-Council-owned buildings, such as shops.

The Chair questioned what was meant by the term 'accessible', highlighting that this should not be limited to the physical accessibility of the building and emphasising that meeting the statutory minimum requirements was not good enough for Manchester. She advised that more detailed work was needed and proposed that she meet with officers outside of the meeting to discuss this further. She suggested that members consider whether it would be beneficial to visit venues with disabled people to understand different experiences of accessibility.

Ms Wrigley informed members that HOME strived to exceed the statutory minimum requirements and outlined a range of steps HOME had taken to make both the venue and the service more accessible. She advised that this was still an ongoing piece of work and she welcomed feedback on how they could improve further. She informed

the Committee that she would welcome a visit from members. In response to comments from the Chair, she acknowledged that car parking was an issue. She advised that HOME did not have any jurisdiction over its adjacent car park, as this was run by a commercial operator. She advised that HOME was petitioning the relevant bodies, including the Council and the private estate managed by CBRE, to improve accessible parking. The Chair thanked Ms Wrigley for attending and advised that the Committee would welcome continued engagement to improve the accessibility of HOME further.

The Deputy Leader advised that the work on accessibility needed to be an integral part of the All Age Disability Strategy. She welcomed the honest feedback provided by HOME and suggested that HOME be used as case study focusing on how accessibility issues could be addressed when working with a willing partner organisation such as HOME.

In response to a member's question, the Strategic Lead (Parks, Leisure and Events) reported that accessibility was built into the design stage of refurbishment work for leisure centres and that most leisure centres across the city were already planned into the refurbishment programme.

The Chair questioned how disabled people were informed that venues had improved accessibility and about targeted events. The Strategic Lead (Parks, Leisure and Events) reported that the Council's leisure operator Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) had employed two development workers whose responsibilities included making connections with disability groups and with schools to communicate the offer for disabled people. However, he recognised that more work was needed to improve accessibility and communicate the offer and he reported that the Executive Member for Culture and Leisure would be chairing a working group to ensure that a clear offer was communicated to disabled people across the areas of galleries, libraries and leisure. He offered to provide the Committee with further information on the working group's work in a future report at an appropriate time. The Strategic Lead (Libraries, Galleries and Culture) reported that the Libraries Service was working to improve the accessibility of the buildings, services and programme of events across all of its libraries and that they could provide further information in a future report.

A member requested further information on what disabled customers could expect when visiting a venue, including what equipment they could expect to be available, what checks were in place to ensure it was working and what training staff would have received. The Chair asked whether a Charter could be developed as part of the All Age Disability Strategy, similar to the Age Friendly Manchester Older People's Charter. The Chair also asked whether a comprehensive guide to accessible venues in Manchester could be produced. The Deputy Leader welcomed the recommendation to develop a Charter, advising that the city was a leader in equality and that this was an opportunity to make a public statement on this commitment. The Equalities Team Leader agreed to take forward these recommendations.

The Chair reported that the Equality Lead Members would be focusing on Disabled Access Day as a priority, taking forward the points raised at the meeting. The Chair requested a further report, responding to the information members had requested, from which the Committee could develop some clear actions.

Decisions

1. To note that the Chair will meet with officers outside of the meeting to discuss how Manchester defines accessibility.
2. To receive a further report at an appropriate time to provide further information in response to the points raised during the meeting, including Manchester's definition of accessibility, what the Council could do to improve accessibility of non-Council owned buildings, such as shops, further information on the working group chaired by the Executive Member for Culture and Leisure and further information on what disabled customers can expect when visiting a venue. This could be included in the report on the All Age Disability Strategy when this is ready.
3. To recommend that an Accessibility Charter be developed as part of the All Age Disability Strategy.
4. To ask the Equalities Team Leader to look into whether a comprehensive guide to accessible venues in Manchester could be produced

CESC/16/30 Overview of the New Policing Model

The Committee received a report of Greater Manchester Police (GMP) which provided an overview of the New Policing Model. The Committee welcomed Superintendent Arif Nawaz from GMP. The Community Safety Lead and Superintendent Nawaz introduced the report across its main themes

In response to members' questions, Superintendent Nawaz provided further clarity on the new model and the culture change within the police service needed to successfully implement this. He assured members that Neighbourhood Police Officers were always on duty 24 hours a day so calls could be responded to, even though Neighbourhood Beat Officers (NBOs) were not always available. He reported that NBOs were dedicated local level officers and that, while they did not work 24 hours a day, the new model increased their capacity, advising that it would be less common for these resources to be diverted elsewhere due to a serious incident than under the old model.

The Committee discussed the advantages and disadvantages of the same officer dealing with cases from start to finish, noting that it would be clearer who to contact for an update but that there could be occasions where that individual was not at work. Superintendent Nawaz reported that the previous system, where the investigation was broken down into its constituent parts, with one officer dealing with each part, had provided efficiency. However, he advised that having one individual responsible for the case throughout could improve quality.

The Committee discussed communication issues between GMP and both residents and members. A member expressed concern that residents who reported a crime were not receiving feedback on the outcome which could lead to a lack of confidence in reporting. He also reported that members now had less contact with their superintendent.

Superintendent Nawaz acknowledged that communication needed to be improved and assured members that he would take steps to improve it. He informed members that GMP would be introducing a dedicated neighbourhood phone number which residents could use to contact their neighbourhood police and that, in areas where this had already been introduced, residents had reported that this was an improvement and that they preferred it to the non-emergency 101 number. The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods advised members that the Council and GMP had arranged two briefing sessions for the end of November, when the new policing model would have been in place for two 12-week shift cycles, to consider what was working well and what wasn't and how this could be improved. He encouraged members to attend one of these sessions. The Chair encouraged members to consider what communication methods they thought would work best for them and to inform the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods.

In response to a member's question, the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods advised that all crimes would be responded to as appropriate but GMP had experienced significant funding cuts over recent years so there were fewer police officers available and prioritisation was needed.

A member asked how more people from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities could be encouraged to join GMP. He expressed concern that, during a recent recruitment exercise, a number of BME applicants had passed the initial stage of the recruitment process but had then been rejected due to the criminal records of other members of their family. Superintendent Nawaz reported that GMP was committed to reflecting the communities they served. He acknowledged that the vetting process was an issue as it prevented people from being recruited due to their associations with other people but that this was a national process which GMP could not change. He reported that during the most recent recruitment round approximately 40 to 50 % of the applicants who passed the assessment centre stage were from BME communities and that these applicants were currently awaiting the vetting process.

The Chair acknowledged that this new model represented a major change for GMP. She requested that the Committee receive an update at a future meeting, provisionally scheduled for May or June next year, considering how the new model was working and taking into account the feedback members had received from residents. A member requested that this include information on how GMP was linking in with the 'Our Manchester' work, to which the Chair agreed.

Decision

To receive an update at a future meeting, provisionally in May or June 2017, to include information on how GMP was linking in with the 'Our Manchester' work.

CESC/16/31
CESC/16/32

Budget Savings Options - Background Information
Growth and Neighbourhoods Directorate Budget Report

The Committee received a report of the Director of Neighbourhoods and the City Treasurer. The report and the appended Growth and Neighbourhoods Directorate Budget report set out the financial considerations, current forecast position and

savings options for the period to 2019/20. Detailed findings of the recent budget conversation held with the residents, businesses, partners and other stakeholders of Manchester were also appended. The Director of Neighbourhoods introduced the report across its main themes.

The Deputy Leader reported that the Council was awaiting the details of its settlement from the national government and expressed concern that Manchester had been disproportionately affected by previous funding cuts. She advised that the Council had adopted the 'Our Manchester' approach to the budget-setting process, setting all the different options out and involving the public in the conversation from an early stage. She also informed members that voluntary and community sector (VCS) funding was not included in the report as no reduction was proposed as part of the budget savings options. However, she advised members that the Council was currently looking at a different way of using this funding, in conjunction with the VCS, and that the Committee would receive information on this at a future meeting. She reported that the Committee would also receive information on funding for some of the work relating to the 'Our Manchester' approach.

Officers answered a range of questions from members about the savings options. A member reported that Neighbourhood Officers played a valuable role in local communities and expressed concern about the impact of any cuts to Neighbourhood Teams. The Chair requested further information on how the 'Our Manchester' approach could be successfully delivered if reductions were made to the Neighbourhood Teams. She reported that the physical environment affected people's views of their local community and that communication and relationship building were key to achieving behaviour change and successfully implementing the 'Our Manchester' approach.

A member expressed concern about the option to reduce Neighbourhood Investment Funding and suggested that a small reduction in the funding for large events, such as the Manchester International Festival, could achieve a similar level of savings. The Director of Neighbourhoods reported that she would feed back this alternative saving option through the appropriate process. The Chair requested a report providing further information on the use of the Neighbourhood Investment Fund over the last two years including whether every ward had used its full allocation, the amount of the average grant, what it had been used for, whether the grants provided were one-off payments or ongoing, the criteria for being allocated a grant and its outcomes at a local level.

The Chair noted that, during the earlier item on Accessibility of Venues, members had discussed the importance of organisations communicating to residents when improvements had been made or events were taking place. She questioned how leisure providers would effectively communicate with residents if their marketing budget was reduced. The Strategic Lead (Parks, Leisure & Events) reported that within Manchester there were three organisations responsible for the leisure venues and across Greater Manchester there were twelve leisure operators. He reported that the Council was encouraging these organisations to work collaboratively to pool resources and run campaigns together. He advised that this would improve marketing to residents through communicating consistent messages about leisure services while also producing savings. The Chair responded that this would be a

positive change, if successful, and recommended that the Committee review progress on this at a future meeting.

The Chair noted the option for the Council to consider stopping maintaining bowling greens and asked for further information on what support the Council would provide to voluntary organisations, such as bowling clubs and 'Friends of' Park groups, on obtaining funding to maintain the greens. The Director of Neighbourhoods reported that the maintenance of bowling greens was within the remit of the Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee and that the Committee had requested further information for its December meeting which could also be shared with this Committee. She reported that Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee was due to receive a report on volunteering, including the support the Council provided for this, at its 4 January meeting. The Chair requested that the information on the savings option for the bowling greens being submitted to the December meeting of the Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee include information on the support offered to organisations to find alternative funding for grounds maintenance costs and is shared with this Committee.

The Chair noted the different levels of engagement in the budget conversation across different demographics and areas of the city and requested further information on what targeted consultation would take place to address this.

Decisions

1. To note the report.
2. To request further information on how the 'Our Manchester' approach could be successfully delivered if reductions were made to the Neighbourhood Teams.
3. To note that the Director of Neighbourhoods will feed back the suggested alternative saving option (to make a small reduction on funding for large events) through the appropriate process.
4. To request a report providing further information on the use of the Neighbourhood Investment Fund over the last two years including whether every ward had used its full allocation, the amount of the average grant, what it had been used for, whether the grants provided were one-off payments or ongoing, the criteria for being allocated a grant and its outcomes at a local level.
5. To review progress on the pooling of marketing resources across leisure operators at a future meeting.
6. To request that the Committee receive the additional information being submitted to the Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee regarding the savings option for bowling greens and that this include information on the support offered to organisations to find alternative funding for grounds maintenance.
7. To request further information from the Head of Strategic Communications on how targeted consultation would be used to address inequalities in response rates to the budget conversation.

[Councillor Evans declared a prejudicial interest, as a family member was employed by the Council in one of the services affected by the savings options, and left the room for this item.]

CESC/16/33 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, which the Committee was asked to approve.

The Budget report was received late as all Budget reports had been published simultaneously. The report on the Overview of the New Policing Model had been received late due to the content being changed at short notice, clearance delays and the report being provided by an external source.

Decision:

To approve the work programme.