

**Manchester City Council  
Report for Information**

**Report to:** Economy Scrutiny Committee

**Subject:** Delivering the Our Manchester Strategy

**Report of:** Deputy Leader of the Council (Housing and Regeneration)

---

**Summary**

This report provides an overview of work undertaken and progress towards the delivery of the Council's priorities as set out in the Our Manchester strategy for those areas within the portfolio of the Deputy Leader of the Council (Housing and Regeneration)

**Recommendations**

The Committee is asked to note and comment on the report.

---

**Contact:**

Name: Councillor Bernard Priest  
Position: Deputy Leader of the Council (Housing and Regeneration)  
Tel: 0161 234 3311  
Email: [cllr.b.priest@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.b.priest@manchester.gov.uk)

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 The Our Manchester Strategy was formally adopted by the Council in January 2016 and sets the ambitions for the city for the next ten years, to 2025, for Manchester to be:

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

1.2 Executive Members are collectively and individually responsible for supporting the delivery of the Our Manchester Strategy and for providing political oversight and direction to officers for the better outcomes for Manchester residents. In October, the Executive also published its collective political priorities and those of individual Executive Members, all of which are aligned to the Our Manchester Strategy.

1.3 This report sets out how I as the Deputy Leader of the Council (Housing and Regeneration) have sought to deliver these priorities over the past six months and is the second twice yearly report to this Committee.

## **2. Deputy Leader of the Council (Housing and Regeneration) - Portfolio**

2.1 As Deputy Leader of the Council (Housing and Regeneration), my portfolio includes oversight of the Council's Housing strategy and its links to business, employment and regeneration, and the coordination of our strategies to improve the beneficial impact of economic growth on Manchester households.

Since May 2017 I have had responsibility for the Council's strategy to reduce Homelessness in our city.

I also have responsibility for the overall coordination of the Council's communications, particularly in support of the Our Manchester strategy, and to ensure residents have effective access to council services.

2.2 During the past year I have had as a priority the provision of affordable housing in Manchester and, until May 2017, improving access to jobs and opportunities for skills improvements for Manchester residents. I now have a new priority, the reduction in Homelessness in our city.

2.3 In addition to these portfolio items I have the lead responsibility for the Town Hall refurbishment project, where a key priority is the creation of social value through the employment of local people in the work to be done over the next six years.

### **3. Progress and Outcomes November 2016- June 2017**

- 3.1 Members of the Council are all fully aware that the substantial increase in the city's population, which results from continued economic growth and cultural attractiveness, brings with it a requirement for the building of many new homes. However, Manchester residents include many who are not yet getting the benefit of the economic growth, and poverty is still a challenge for many households. Improving access to affordable housing for those surviving below the average income for the city is a political priority for the Executive.
- 3.2 The Council has now adopted a definition of 'affordable housing' which can be used more effectively to guide its housing strategy. Our definition, which states that housing is 'affordable' if it costs no more than 30% of household income, allows us to identify affordability in relation to the incomes of real Manchester households, not to some notional national formula.
- 3.3 The Executive, at its meeting in December 2016, approved a report setting a target for 1000-2000 new affordable homes to be built in our city each year for the foreseeable future. This target was established after a detailed review of plans developed by social landlords, the Council and its many private and public sector partners, and while it is likely to be challenging, I am confident that we will achieve it in the current year.
- 3.4 Since 2010 the UK government, for the first time in over a century, has refused to provide funding for new social housing. Despite a number of announcements, the actions of the government continue to threaten the viability of social housing. It is possible that government funding may become available for new affordable housing projects, and it will be important that we are ready to take up any opportunities created. The strong partnership we have with housing providers should ensure that we are.
- 3.5 Manchester has a strong partnership between the Council and the providers of social housing, and I have been working with that partnership to explore the options to counter this threat. So far we have a growing commitment to maintain the current number at 68,000 homes, but we need to press for the funding for an extension beyond this.
- 3.6 The private rented sector has grown dramatically in the past decade, and poses a number of challenges around the quality of the homes provided by some landlords, the poor security provided by short-term tenancies, and the use of fees and deposits which for some represent significant barriers. We have now introduced landlord licensing schemes in four communities (ably led during the past year by Councillor Bridges in his role as Assistant Executive Member). It should be possible within a few months to begin to assess the effectiveness of these schemes.

- 3.7 Plans have not progressed as quickly as I would have liked to introduce a social lettings agency, which would act for private landlords to let and maintain their properties, but which would adopt the social mission towards tenants of a social housing provider. Discussions are progressing, and I am hopeful that we will see some action within the next few months.
- 3.8 Homelessness is a growing but very complex problem in our city (as it is throughout the country). I worked closely with Councillor Paul Andrews on our strategic response to the problem throughout the past year, and now have taken over lead responsibility within the Executive.
- 3.9 Increasingly, social landlords in the city are providing homes to people making the difficult transition back from homelessness. However, the scale of the problem is such that this cannot be the only solution, and I have now started work on a more ambitious strategy to support people at risk of homelessness, and to explore the need for supported housing options for those less able to solve their own housing needs.

The most common immediate cause of homelessness in our city remains eviction from private rented accommodation. I am working to focus attention on preventative measures, because it is much more difficult and very much more expensive to support people after they have been evicted.

- 3.10 I attend meetings of the Manchester Strategic Housing Partnership, and the GM Planning and Housing Commission, where I work to shift agendas onto the pressing priorities I have outlined here. The arrival of the GM Mayor provides another location for activity, and while it is early days yet the signs are that a more effective housing strategy for the conurbation is now possible.
- 3.11 If Manchester residents are to get more benefit from strengthened economy of the city, they need to be able to improve their skills and their ability to get the good jobs. Government funding cuts have had a dramatic impact on our further education colleges, and the recommendations of the 2016 Area Based Review have largely been set aside. At the present the future of further education in our city remains uncertain, and Councillor Angeliki Stogia takes over this portfolio area at an interesting time.
- 3.12 Our own service, the Manchester Adult Education Service (MAES) continues to provide access to vocational skills for many local people, and received a good report following its recent Ofsted inspection.

#### **4. Priorities for the Next Six Months**

- 4.0 I have been working with the Head of Strategic Communications to follow up the successful budget consultation, from which we could clearly identify things which matter to Mancunians. Starting this month we are planning a series of major communication events, using the brand "Our Manchester...Value for Money", which will aim to involve residents in discussions about our performance on key service areas.

- 4.1 I chair the steering group for the Town Hall project. We are now committed to a full refurbishment of the Town Hall, and work will start in early 2018. Many of the teams which were based in the Town Hall have now moved out to other locations, and by the end of 2017 the remaining teams will have been relocated. Our ambition is to make the project deliver strong social value to our city, and we have a growing number of apprentices in place as a key starting point for this objective. Scrutiny of a major report on this social value aspect of the project is scheduled for this month.