

Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 6 September 2016

Present:

Councillor Longsden – In the Chair

Councillors Azra Ali, Chohan, Hughes, Igbon, S.Judge, Kirkpatrick, Leech, Ludford, Noor, Rawson, Sadler and Sheikh

Councillor N Murphy, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods

Councillor B Priest, Deputy Leader

Dave Williams, Group Director of Assets & Growth - One Manchester

Peter Naughton, Chair of Levenshulme Community Association

Apologies: Councillors Paul, Peel and Marshall

NESC/16/17 Appointment of the Chair

In the absence of the Chair a recommendation was made to appoint Councillor Longsden as Chair. This recommendation was seconded.

Decision

To appoint Councillor Longsden as Chair.

NESC/16/18 Minutes

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2016 as a correct record.

NESC/16/19 Manchester – Housing Strategy and Delivery

The Committee considered the report submitted by the Director of Housing which was provided in two sections. The first section presented the draft Housing Strategy for Manchester 2016 – 2021. The Committee were invited to comment on this document prior to its submission to the Executive in November 2016. The second part of the report provided the Committee with an update on Affordable Homes, Manchester Move, Empty Homes, Updates on the Task and Finish Group outcomes on Market Rental and Homelessness. The Director of Housing introduced the report across its broad themes.

The Deputy Leader said that there is a lot of work underway around this subject area and he welcomed members' comments and feedback. The Deputy Leader responded to a comment from a member who said that more social housing is required. He said that the Capital Grants to fund the building of social housing had

reduced, however compared to other cities Manchester was continuing to deliver housing.

Members discussed the proposed 'Pay to Stay' scheme and the impact that this will have on Manchester residents in social housing. The Director of Housing said that the details of the scheme are still to be released by central government. In response to a member's question about how tenants' incomes are to be assessed if this information is not provided by the tenant he said that it could be through accessing HMRC records, credit agencies or potentially having to make assumptions about a tenants income. He said that until the details of this scheme are confirmed by central government it is difficult to comment on exactly how this will be administered.

The Director of Housing informed the members that any additional income collected by Manchester City Council through the Pay to Stay Scheme will have to be returned to the Treasury and will not be retained by the Council to reinvest. This is in contrast to Registered Housing Providers who will be able to retain all additional income collected.

Members then discussed the impact of Welfare Reform and housing, especially on young people. The Director of Housing said that this is a significant emerging issue, not just in Manchester but nationally. He said that by 2018 the changes in benefit will mean that any single person under the age of 35 will have their Housing Benefit entitlement restricted to the single room rate. The Committee welcomed Dave Williams, Group Director of Assets and Growth, One Manchester who said that they are providing advice and information to their tenants about the benefit changes. He said that tenants are supported to down size but they would not yet encourage tenants to sublet.

A member commented on the Manchester Move system and asked what is being done to help those residents who may not have access to the internet and are not in an area with a local housing office. Dave Williams, Group Director of Assets and Growth, One Manchester said that they offer a variety of help and guidance for their tenants that can be accessed across a range of community venues. He said that this service is available to residents who are not their tenants. The Director of Housing said that he would ask the Manchester Move Board for an update on access issues.

In response to members' comments about the Manchester Rental Pledge the Director of Housing said this is a statement and commitment that landlords can sign up to that is maintained by the Council. He said it is not legally enforceable however it is part of a wider strategy to promote good practice and help establish links between private landlords and professional organisations such as the National Landlords Association. He said that in addition to this a Selective Licensing consultation is underway as part of a wider programme of activity to improve standards across the Private Rented Sector.

Members commented upon the issues that tenants face within the Private Rented Sector such as high fees, high rents, short tenancy agreements and disrepair. Members said that they supported the establishment of a social lettings and property management agency to help address these issues. The Director of Housing said he welcomed the members' support.

A member asked if there were any plans to develop more veterans housing schemes within the city. The Director of Housing said that the Council had worked closely with the Walking with the Wounded charity to successfully deliver the Veterans Village in Newton Heath. He said that consideration would be given to any other requests for similar developments across Greater Manchester.

The Strategic Lead, Adults Public Health responded to members' questions regarding homelessness. She said that the Student Action Group will no longer give out food as there is no shortage of charities distributing food within the city. She said that the Student Action Group and the University had been very responsive to delivering a coordinated advice and support service, along with other partner agencies that will best serve the needs of homeless people.

The Strategic Lead, Adults Public Health informed the Committee that the M Think database is a database for rough sleepers and not homeless people. She said that it is a city wide database that can be accessed and updated by partner agencies. She said that the ambition is to roll this out across Greater Manchester.

In response to a comment from a member regarding homeless people being attracted to Manchester the Strategic Lead, Adults Public Health said this is a recognised issue. She said that work is ongoing to review preventing homelessness, with the ambition of delivering a Greater Manchester wider Prevention Programme. She said that the prevention of homelessness is important as it avoids crisis and the massive disruption this can have on families.

Decisions

1. To note the progress made to date on delivering the Housing Strategy for Manchester 2016 – 2021.
2. To note the progress in relation to the five key areas of housing activity across the city.

NESC/16/20 Area Plans and Ward Coordination

The Committee considered the report submitted by the Deputy Chief Executive, Growth and Neighbourhoods. The report provided an update on the developing Area Plans and changes to the delivery of Ward Coordination following the creation of the new Neighbourhoods Service in January 2016. The report further described ward level Climate Change activity in response to discussion at the last Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee. (see NESC/16/13 Manchester City Council Climate Change Action Plan and Emissions Report). The Director of Neighbourhoods introduced the report across its broad themes.

The Committee welcomed Peter Naughton, Chair of Levenshulme Community Association. He said that he welcomed the report and asked that residents and community groups are involved in Ward Coordination and with the development of Place Plans. The Strategic Lead, Neighbourhoods North said that the 'Our

Manchester' approach is being adopted to engage with and listen to the views of residents, community groups and stakeholders to then inform Area Plans.

The Deputy Leader said a strategic priority for Council is to support and encourage local communities and residents to become resilient and empowered to become active within their local communities.

The Committee said that they welcomed the report. A member said that partnership working and good communications across a range of stakeholders such as GMP, Health, Housing Providers and Schools will help deliver and support sustainable neighbourhoods.

In response to a member's question regarding climate change activity at a ward level the Director of Neighbourhoods said that Ward Coordination will identify 5 or 6 local priorities. She said that climate change activity may not be explicit at a ward level however wider strategic activity will address these issues, such as improvements to cycling routes. The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods said that if such a priority is identified at a ward level this can then help inform wider strategic planning.

The Chair informed the Committee that a report on Cycling is scheduled for consideration at the November meeting.

Decision

To note the report.

NESC/16/21 Overview Report

A report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit which contained key decisions within the Committee's remit and responses to previous recommendations was submitted for comment. Members were also invited to agree the Committee's future work programme.

The report on Manchester – Housing Strategy and Delivery had been received late for the meeting as it had not had the appropriate Executive clearance.

Decision

To note the report.