

## **Economy Scrutiny Committee – District Centres Subgroup**

### **Minutes of the meeting held on 21 July 2016**

#### **Present:**

Councillor Shilton Godwin – in the Chair  
Councillors Amesbury, Appleby, Farrell, Hacking and A Simcock

Councillor Priest, Deputy Leader

Professor Cathy Parker, Institute of Place Management, Manchester Metropolitan University  
Professor Dominic Medway, Institute of Place Management, Manchester Metropolitan University

#### **Apologies:**

Councillor Richards

### **ESC/OSG/16/03                      Minutes**

#### **Decision**

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2016.

### **ESC/OSG/16/04                      Understanding the City – Evidence from Manchester**

The Subgroup received a report of the Planning and Infrastructure Manager which provided members with an overview of the strategic context and evidence on district centres. The Planning and Infrastructure Manager provided an overview of the report and the information in the appendices.

The Subgroup welcomed Professor Cathy Parker and Professor Dominic Medway from the Institute of Place Management, Manchester Metropolitan University, who were working with the Council, undertaking research on Manchester's district centres.

Members discussed the definition of and diversity of Manchester's district centres. A member reported that some district centres did not provide services which met the needs of the whole local community. Professor Parker advised that some district centres provided a speciality offer which attracted people from other areas but that it was important that these centres also served the local community.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Planning and Infrastructure Manager reported that the Council might need to identify an area of the city which could be a centre for artists as the city centre was too expensive for this. Professor Medway advised that district centres could serve not just the local community but other types of community such as the 'arts community', the 'sports community' (for example, around Eastlands) and the 'health and well-being community' (for example, around The Christie). Professor Parker informed the Subgroup that she could assist with

establishing principles for identifying types of district centres. The Chair agreed to this.

A member questioned whether it was possible to have an overarching strategy for such a diverse range of district centres. He also questioned whether the Subgroup's objectives were too wide-ranging and whether members should focus on a few key objectives. The Chair reported that the Subgroup's role was to contribute to and review the work on district centres, not to undertake all the work itself. The Planning and Infrastructure Manager advised members that the Council could have an overarching strategy which acknowledged the diversity of the district centres. The Chair supported this recommendation.

A member advised that similar work in Stockport had taken a bottom-up approach, identifying what traders and customers wanted. He also advised that some of the changes could be inexpensive and within the Council's remit, for example, improving rubbish collection. He recommended that the Council identify good practice and produce a toolkit of targeted interventions which had worked in a particular type of district centre. Professor Parker informed members that she had practical information on issues such as setting up markets which could be used by local communities. A member reported that traders were concerned about practical, day-to-day issues such as cleanliness and the availability of parking. The Planning and Infrastructure Manager advised that the policy framework should include day-to-day issues and would incorporate a 'toolkit'.

The Deputy Leader informed members that the city had ambitions to build more housing for a growing population but that the areas where homes were likely to be built did not have district centres. He emphasised the important role of district centres, including giving areas an identity. He advised members that the Council should review which growing residential areas did not have access to a local district centre and focus its work on this. Professor Parker supported this approach and reported that housing and transport were key factors in the level of footfall in district centres as were 'anchors', such as a nearby hospital, which drew people into an area. She informed members that she could help in identifying areas' 'anchors'. The Chair recommended that the Subgroup compare plans for forthcoming housing development and public transport development against the current provision of district centres. A member requested that car use and the availability of parking spaces be considered when the Subgroup looked at transport.

In response to a member's question, the Head of Work and Skills advised members that there was no additional Council funding to invest in district centres but that there had been private sector investment in some areas and there was potential for this in other areas. She reported that the Council might need to prioritise some centres, for example, those in areas of residential growth but that there were some actions within the Council's remit which could be implemented across all district centres. The Chair requested that the Subgroup receive and consider further information on how the Council could influence district centres through its policies and practices.

A member questioned whether the Council should focus on areas which generated higher business rates for the city. The Deputy Leader reported that, for some parts of the city, the nearest district centre was within a neighbouring local authority. He

advised that the Council should take action which would encourage residents to spend their money within the city with businesses which would be paying business rates to Manchester. The Head of Work and Skills informed members that Economy Scrutiny Committee would be considering a report on business rates at its 7 September meeting. She advised that the Council should consider whether its strategy on business rates could be used to support its priorities in relation to district centres. A member suggested that residents could be encouraged to shop locally by making them aware that Manchester-based businesses contributed to the funding of services in the city.

### **Decisions**

1. To support the development of an overarching strategy on district centres which identifies key principles and recognises the diversity of the city's district centres.
2. To request that Professor Parker assist with establishing principles for identifying types of district centres.
3. That the Subgroup compare plans for forthcoming housing development and public transport development against the current provision of district centres and that this work include consideration of car use and the availability of parking spaces.
4. To request that the Subgroup receive and consider further information on how the Council could influence district centres through its policies and practices.

### **ESC/OSG/16/05**

#### **Economy Scrutiny Committee Recommendation**

The Chair informed members that the Economy Scrutiny Committee had recommended that the District Centres Subgroup consider the digital infrastructure of district centres, particularly provision for start-up businesses. Members agreed to incorporate this into the Subgroup's work and to have a whole meeting focused on transport and digital infrastructure. Members also agreed to invite representatives from Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) to this meeting.

### **Decisions**

1. To incorporate digital infrastructure into the work programme for the Subgroup.
2. To have a meeting focused on transport and digital infrastructure and to invite representatives from Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) to this meeting.

### **ESC/OSG/16/06**

#### **Terms of Reference and Work Programme**

The Subgroup reviewed the Terms of Reference and work programme.

The Chair recommended that the next meeting of the Subgroup focus on evidence from external witnesses and that the following meeting consider transport and digital infrastructure.

Following a discussion on a range of external guests who could be invited to the next meeting, the Subgroup agreed to invite traders' representatives from Moston Lane and Chorlton and Didsbury and representatives from Levenshulme Market, Manchester Markets and the Makers Market. It was agreed that members would provide the Committee Support Officer with details of the relevant representatives. A

member also requested that the guests be provided with a guide for witnesses to prepare them for the meeting.

A member recommended that the Subgroup ask the invitees to gather the views of the members of their association. It was suggested that a short online survey could be used. The Chair requested that members email her with suggested questions for the survey.

A member questioned the content and timing of the “Development of Chorlton and Wythenshawe District Centres” report. The Chair agreed to discuss this with the Strategic Director (Strategic Development) outside of the meeting.

## **Decisions**

1. That the next meeting of the Subgroup focus on evidence from external witnesses and that the following meeting consider transport and digital infrastructure.
2. To invite traders’ representatives from Moston Lane and Chorlton and Didsbury to attend the next meeting.
3. To invite representatives from Levenshulme Market, Manchester Markets and the Makers Market to the same meeting.
4. To request that members provide the Committee Support Officer with details of the relevant representatives and to request that she provides them with a guide for witnesses to prepare them for the meeting.
5. To ask invitees to circulate a short online survey to the members of their association.
6. To ask members to email the Chair with their suggested questions for this survey.
7. To ask the Chair to review, in conjunction with officers, the proposed item on the Development of Chorlton and Wythenshawe District Centres.