

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: District Centres Subgroup – 23 February 2017
Subject: District Centres, Proposed Outline of Future Work Programme
Report of: Strategic Director, Strategic Developments

Summary

This report responds to the Chair's interim findings paper, setting out how the issues and actions suggested could be addressed through a programme of work.

Recommendations

To note the contents of the report and provide any comments or observations to officers.

Wards Affected: All

Contact Officers:

Name: Eddie Smith
Position: Strategic Director,
Strategic Developments
Telephone: 0161 234 3030
E-mail: e.smith@manchester.gov.uk

Name: James Shuttleworth
Position: Planning and Infrastructure
Manager
Telephone: 0161 234 4594
E-mail: j.shuttleworth@manchester.gov.uk

Background documents (available for public inspection):

None

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Chair's paper on interim outputs from the District Centres subgroup summarises the issues identified in the group's meeting to date, and identifies potential areas on which future action and intervention should be focussed. This paper seeks to respond to these observations, proposing an outline work programme to frame the council's approach to centres.
- 1.2 It is very apparent that centres are a complex and important part of the city's geography. Although the Local Plan identifies 17 District Centre, across these centres there is a wide variety in terms of character and function. An important aim of the group is to suggest principles of management and intervention in centres, but these will need to be applied with a clear understanding of each centre's specific needs.
- 1.3 Each centre plays a number of key roles. These include a social role by providing access to important services (commercial and public) and by reinforcing people's sense of connection to their neighbourhoods. There is also an economic role, with the character of centres being a result of the way various economic actions and processes interact. This complexity makes it difficult to clearly predict and manage what happens within centres.
- 1.4 The council has an important role to play in the management and support of centres. It has responsibilities relating to regulation (through planning and licensing policy), management (through, for example, street cleaning), property and leadership (providing a vision for place and support to deliver this). However, it is important to recognise the complexity of forces that shape centres, and that the council's intervention should work with the grain of these forces.

2.0 Outline Programme of Work

- 2.1 The proposed programme of work seeks to provide a greatly improved understanding of the way Manchester's centres work. It will develop an understanding of best-practice options to intervene and manage centres, and work-up more detailed options for a number of centres. In the longer term, the findings of this work will inform policies in a reviewed Local Plan. Overall, this work will provide a substantial response to the actions outlined in the Chair's paper.

Develop effective understanding of Manchester's centres

- 2.2 The Institute of Place Management has begun work to classify Manchester's District Centres according to a typology it has developed through work across 99 UK centres. This is an initial view, based on evidence the council has been able to provide, including use surveys and 'liveability' research. It is proposed that this work is enhanced through more detailed footfall data for eight centres, which will be used to develop a clearer understanding of these centres and verify the conclusions reached for the other centres.

- 2.3 This work will enable the council to understand how centres operate, and thereby propose an effective hierarchy of centres for the city. This will recognise the different roles centres can play, and begin to set out how centres interact in networks across neighbourhoods.
- 2.4 This work will also be able to highlight the quality of centres across the City. The Institute of Place Management will propose a methodology for identifying neighbourhoods which do not benefit from access to effective centres. This assessment will be based on an understanding of the services people particularly value in centres. The work will highlight neighbourhoods without good access to a centre, but also those relying on centres that do not currently offer a full range of services.

Analyse options for effective management and intervention

- 2.5 It is proposed that the next focus of work considers effective strategic approaches to centres and the options for management and intervention that the council and its partners could employ. Based on extensive experience working in centres across the UK, the Institute of Place Management will prepare a paper on the context, vision and strategy for the management and development of vital and viable centres. The approach will be focused on the activity that takes place in centres, rather than traditional planning definitions of how centres should function. It will suggest how the council and other stakeholders can most effectively focus on centres' particular strengths to chart a clear route to become more viable and attractive places.
- 2.6 To complement this work, the IPM will also work with the council to prepare a 'mindmap' of potential policies and interventions. This can then be used to consider the most appropriate responses to different centres across the city. The council's interventions should reflect the 'Our Manchester' approach, seeking opportunities to work with local stakeholders and reinforce local stakeholder networks.

Develop detailed proposals for case study centres

- 2.7 The final area of work would seek to apply the principles identified to a number of centres in Manchester. Manchester has many centres, and it will not be possible to undertake detailed work on all of them. Over the next six months, work will be undertaken to consider four (or eight) centres in Manchester. This work will include:
- A detailed review of the centre
 - An action plan for intervention
 - A policy pilot to test the effectiveness of intervention options
- 2.8 These pilots would take account of the research undertaken to better understand the City's centres, and would therefore probably focus on different types of centres to better test the hypotheses emerging through the work.

Local Plan Development

- 2.9 The work that the council carries out with the Institute of Place Management is likely to propose a range of intervention options open to the council. Among these, planning policy will be important. The council should develop an

appropriate set of planning policies to support wider aims for centres. Executive has approved the review of Manchester's Local Plan. The review is being driven by a number of considerations, including the need to reflect the development of the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework. However, alongside other issues this will be an opportunity to consider the most appropriate planning policy for centres. This will reflect the refined and updated understanding developed through the work of this group. Through the Local Plan review the council will be able to consider the network and hierarchy of centres and the most appropriate centre boundaries.

- 2.10 Preparation of the Local Plan is likely be a three year process. This will include extensive consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, but the concepts developed through the work set out above will be a key piece of evidence supporting the plan.
- 2.11 In advance of this, a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is being produced to provide policy specifically for hot food takeaways. Consultation on this document has already taken place, and the SPD is expected to be adopted following the Executive meeting in March 2017.

3.0 Summary and Conclusion

- 3.1 From observations made throughout the subgroup's meetings, which are captured in the Chair's paper earlier on this agenda, a programme of work on centres is proposed. This work seeks to:
- Get a more detailed understanding of how our centres work, and where support is needed.
 - Prepare a scheme of interventions through policy, engagement and investment, to clarify what the options for interventions are and the circumstances in which each is appropriate.
 - Develop pilots to test the effectiveness of interventions, which can then be applied more widely, taking advantage of available resources and emerging opportunities.
 - Ensure that the review of the Local Plan includes policies to support the council's aims for centres.
- 3.2 This work will provide the council with a robust strategic approach to centres, underpinning interventions that drive positive outcomes. These outcomes will not occur in the short-term, though. Centres develop and change gradually, responding to changes in the activity within them and in the nature of the surrounding catchment. The council's strategy for centres should sit within a sustained programme of neighbourhood improvement.