

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: District Centres Subgroup – 18 January 2018

Subject: Place Management Pilots – proposed approach and potential outcomes

Report of: Strategic Director (Strategic Developments)

Summary

This report provides some background to the work due to begin shortly on place management pilots being undertaken as part of the District Centres Subgroup work programme. It sets out the expected approach to work within the centres included in the pilots, and suggests what type of outcomes are most likely to emerge from this work.

Recommendations

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

Wards Affected:

Chorlton, Chorlton Park, Gorton North, Harpurhey, Northenden.

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

None

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Council's Economy Scrutiny Committee has shown interest in how centres in Manchester are performing since March 2014. This interest led to the establishment of the District Centres Subgroup in 2016. From the outset, a particular focus on the subgroup has been on the overall performance of centres, their contribution to wider Council aims and the potential impact of Council policy.
- 1.2 To support the assessment and analysis of centres, the Council has engaged the Institute of Place Management (based at Manchester Metropolitan University). The IPM has extensive understanding of town and district centre performance, as well as working with stakeholders to improve the way centres work. Through the District Centres Subgroup, the IPM has undertaken an initial evaluation of Manchester's centres. Whilst this evaluation was able to make some conclusions about Manchester's centres, it was apparent that this was a partial view without detailed evidence of day-to-day activity. Therefore, with the support of the IPM, it was then agreed that footfall counters will be installed in ten centres in Manchester. These will provide detailed evidence about how the centres are used, enabling a more thorough assessment of the centres' performance and their role for surrounding neighbourhoods.
- 1.3 Supported by the detailed evidence the footfall counters will provide, a work programme has been developed that will include more detailed centre assessment and a set of recommendations for future interventions to support healthy centres in Manchester. At the core of this work programme will be four place management pilots. These will be an opportunity to gain particularly detailed understanding of how the four centres work, develop initiatives that could result in improvements in these centres and produce policy recommendations that can support more effective interventions by the Council and its partners in other parts of Manchester. This report briefly sets out how these place management pilots will be run, and what the outcomes of this work could be.

2.0 Approach to the Place Management Pilots

- 2.1 A rationale for the selection of four centres was developed, which sought to select a range of centres based on character and location. Based on this, the four centres for the place management pilots are Chorlton, Gorton, Harpurhey and Northenden. In each of these centres a footfall counter will be installed. The counters are already in place in Harpurhey and Gorton. In Chorlton and Northenden, installation is awaiting approval from the traders that have been proposed as locations for the counters.
- 2.2 The approach to the four pilots will be informed by previous IPM research. Most notably, the IPM led the High Street UK 2020 project (HSUK2020). This work sought to connect key stakeholders in centres to share knowledge and to cooperate in activity to promote centre health. Through this work, a list of 25 priority factors that shape centres' success was identified. From these factors,

the IPM has developed a Town Centre Vitality Programme, which will provide the basis for the Place Management Pilots.

- 2.3 The IPM have worked in a number of other centres in the UK before, and it is anticipated that the approach in Manchester will reflect that used in other centres. A key aim is that the pilots will have close involvement from stakeholders in and around the centre, including Council services, traders, landowners, councillors and residents. This approach is clearly closely aligned to Our Manchester, pioneering broader delivery partnerships that can pursue shared aims. Whilst the Council will remain an essential partner to any work taking place within centres, it recognises that sustained success relies on commitment from other local stakeholders.
- 2.4 At the outset, Council officers will provide the IPM with an overview of each centre, setting out the issues and opportunities. These discussion will be supplemented by further survey and research material to supplement findings. This includes a centre use survey updated in late 2017 by the Council and an audit of the four centres undertaken by students at Manchester Metropolitan University. The audit will assess the centres against the 25 priorities for centres that were identified in the IPM's previous research.
- 2.5 The next stage in the pilot will be to hold a workshop in each of the four centres. The invitees to the workshop will include all the key local stakeholders identified previously. It will also be open to other people to attend, as the aim is to have as broad a group of people engaged as possible.
- 2.6 The approach hopes to emphasise the potential for ongoing centre interventions to be designed locally. Whilst the Council has an important role, the pilots should be an opportunity for local stakeholders to shape local policy and action. This approach will give the pilots stronger local connections and also potentially attract stakeholders who may not have previously chosen to engage.
- 2.7 Invitees will include local members, businesses, landowners, residents and key local service providers (including schools, policy and health), as well as Council officers working in the area.
- 2.8 Through the workshop, the IPM will explain recent changes in the function of centres in the UK and summarise the conclusions of their research into the key factors that impact on a centre's performance. Through facilitated group discussions, the local stakeholders will then consider which factors are most significant in their centre, and therefore suggest which actions could be most beneficial for them.
- 2.9 On the basis of the workshops, the IPM will prepare a report for each centre. This report will include a list of recommended actions. Based on the framework developed through the HSUK2020 project and the discussion at the workshops, these will be the actions considered to have the greatest potential to improve the centre's function. The report will also incorporate further policy

pilot suggestions, considering new approaches and policy levers that could support positive changes for these centres.

3.0 Expected Outputs from the Place Management Pilots

- 3.1 The core output from the pilot work will be the IPM report that sets out recommended actions to improve the centres' vitality. The report will be presented to key local stakeholders through a further meeting, which will seek to develop initial action plans to implement these recommendations.
- 3.2 An important emphasis of the pilots is that change should be driven by local networks of stakeholders. It is expected that the Place Management Pilots will support the development of stronger local networks which are able to both carry forward recommendations from the pilot but also direct an ongoing programme of local place management to secure mutual benefits. The collaborative approach of the workshop is intended to identify shared aims and interests, which will provide a foundation for ongoing cooperation.
- 3.3 Recognising that the centres in Manchester are different many of those involved in the HSUK2020 project, the Place Management Pilots will incorporate further policy proposals for the four centres. This will seek to explore possible measures beyond those identified through the HSUK2020 work. Taking account of the findings from the workshops and local research, this proposal will set out potential policy levers the Council could implement to change the trajectory of the pilot centres in a positive way. This could cover measures such as active management of retailer representation, changes in service delivery patterns or focussing development or activity in specific locations.
- 3.4 The benefits of the Place Management Pilots are expected to extend beyond the four selected centres. Whilst the recommendations will reflect the circumstances of these centres, it is hoped that more general principles will emerge that can be applied in centres across Manchester, shaping the way in which the Council undertakes its functions and how it engages with other local stakeholders to maximise centre vitality. It is anticipated that this work will be particularly valuable for the review of Manchester's local plan.
- 3.5 The Place Management Pilot will be the core activity associated with the District Centre subgroup work programme. However, the programme includes associated outputs that will further benefit the Council's input in centres in the future. These include a toolkit of potential place management interventions, informed by the IPM's previous experience and the findings of the Place Management Pilots. This will provide a systematic list of potential interventions, which ensures that resources and interventions are more sharply focused on what is likely to be most effective.
- 3.6 A further output of the work will be a methodology for identifying underserved locations in Manchester, which will support effective neighbourhood planning. This will be particularly important in areas where considerable residential

growth is planned, where the enhancement of the existing centre offer may be an important aspect of effective place-making.

4.0 Conclusion

- 4.1 Following a considerable period of information gathering and local assessment and engagement, the work of the District Centre subgroup is beginning a more active phase at the local level. The Place Management Pilots will be an important means of developing a more detailed understanding of the issues in these areas, and creating stronger local networks that are able to approach centre management using Our Manchester principles of engagement and coproduction.
- 4.2 This work programme is not aligned to any specific capital investment plans (albeit development opportunities may be identified through the work as key deliverables). Rather, it is hoped that it will establish a means of co-working that is able to produce the best outcomes for these places, with each stakeholder (including the Council) playing their full part.