



Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee

Date: Thursday, 8 February 2024

Time: 10.00 am

Venue: Council Antechamber, Level 2, Town Hall Extension

This is a **Revised Agenda**.

Access to the Council Antechamber

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Membership of the Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee

Councillors - Simcock (Chair), Andrews, Brickell, Connolly, Davies, Evans, Kilpatrick, Kirkpatrick, Lanchbury, Rowles, Stogia and Wheeler

Revised Agenda

- 1. Urgent Business**
To consider any items which the Chair has agreed to have submitted as urgent.
- 2. Appeals**
To consider any appeals from the public against refusal to allow inspection of background documents and/or the inclusion of items in the confidential part of the agenda.
- 3. Interests**
To allow Members an opportunity to [a] declare any personal, prejudicial or disclosable pecuniary interests they might have in any items which appear on this agenda; and [b] record any items from which they are precluded from voting as a result of Council Tax/Council rent arrears; [c] the existence and nature of party whipping arrangements in respect of any item to be considered at this meeting. Members with a personal interest should declare that at the start of the item under consideration. If Members also have a prejudicial or disclosable pecuniary interest they must withdraw from the meeting during the consideration of the item.
- 4. Minutes** 5 - 18
To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2024.
- 5. Elections Act Duties Progress Report** 19 - 38
Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer and the City Solicitor.

This report outlines the planning and governance arrangements for the implementation of existing and new duties within the Elections Act 2022 for Manchester. This includes developing extensive engagement and producing an Elections Outreach Pack.
- 6. Public Buildings Maintenance Contract**
This item has been withdrawn from the agenda.
- 7. A new Our Manchester Strategy 2025-2035** 39 - 46
Report of the Assistant Chief Executive.

This report describes the background to and process of creating a new Our Manchester Strategy for the city.
- 8. Revenue Budget Update and Corporate Core Budget 2024/25** To Follow
- 9. Housing Revenue Account 2024/25 to 2026/27** To Follow

10. Overview Report

47 - 64

Report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit.

This report provides the Committee with details of key decisions that fall within the Committee's remit and an update on actions resulting from the Committee's recommendations. The report also includes the Committee's work programme, which the Committee is asked to amend as appropriate and agree.

Information about the Committee

Scrutiny Committees represent the interests of local people about important issues that affect them. They look at how the decisions, policies and services of the Council and other key public agencies impact on the city and its residents. Scrutiny Committees do not take decisions but can make recommendations to decision-makers about how they are delivering the Manchester Strategy, an agreed vision for a better Manchester that is shared by public agencies across the city.

The Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee areas of interest include finances, Council buildings, staffing, corporate and partnership governance as well as Council tax and benefits administration.

The Council wants to consult people as fully as possible before making decisions that affect them. Members of the public do not have a right to speak at meetings but may do so if invited by the Chair. If you have a special interest in an item on the agenda and want to speak, tell the Committee Officer, who will pass on your request to the Chair. Groups of people will usually be asked to nominate a spokesperson. The Council wants its meetings to be as open as possible but occasionally there will be some confidential business. Brief reasons for confidentiality will be shown on the agenda sheet.

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Further Information

For help, advice and information about this meeting please contact the Committee Officer:

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This revised agenda was issued on **Wednesday, 31 January 2024** by the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit, Manchester City Council, Level 3, Town Hall Extension (Mount Street Elevation), Manchester M60 2LA

Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 11 January 2024

Present:

Councillor Simcock (Chair) – in the Chair
Councillors Andrews, Connolly, Davies, Evans, Kilpatrick, Kirkpatrick, Lanchbury, Rowles and Wheeler

Also present:

Councillor Midgley, Deputy Leader
Councillor Akbar, Executive Member for Finance and Resources
Councillor White, Executive Member for Housing and Development
Richard Dunbar, Debt Justice
Alison Aitken, ACORN

Apologies: Councillors Brickell and Stogia

RGSC/24/1 Interests

Councillor Connolly declared a personal interest in item 14 – Commercial Activity, Investments and Governance (Part B).

RGSC/24/2 Minutes

In approving the minutes, a member requested further information on the number of council-owned properties which were undergoing work or refurbishment and not officially classed as empty.

It was also clarified under minute RGSC/23/70 that a member had highlighted that there would be a discrepancy between the Real Living Wage and the National Living Wage once the latter was increased in April 2024 and that the Council needed to explore this in order to retain its accreditation as a Real Living Wage employer.

Decision:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2023 be approved as a correct record and that the clarification above be noted.

RGSC/24/3 Increasing Council Tax Premiums on Empty Properties

The committee considered a report of the Head of Corporate Revenues which provided an overview of and update on new powers provided by legislation to increase the Council Tax on empty properties.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- New powers under the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 stipulated that:
 - Empty, unfurnished properties would pay the 100% long term empty premium after one year instead of two years from 1 April 2024.
 - Empty, furnished properties would pay up to a 100% premium from the date that they became empty from 1 April 2025.
- Consultation on these proposals was undertaken as part of the 2023 budget consultation;
- The financial implications of applying the premium;
- Safeguards in place, such as the Discretionary Council Tax Payment scheme; and
- A further report would be brought to Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee and Executive in advance of introducing the new policy for empty and furnished properties from 1 April 2025.

Some of the key points and queries that arose from the committee's discussions included:

- If the Council collected council tax on properties that were empty whilst under probate and, if so, whether any discretion could be applied in such circumstances;
- Whether modelling had been undertaken of the anticipated savings as a result of increasing the premium; and
- How the new powers would drive behaviour change from owners of empty properties.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources introduced the report and explained that the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 had been delayed and was passed in late October 2023. He stated that the increased premiums would bring in much-needed revenue for Manchester and that it enabled the Council to encourage homeowners to bring empty properties onto the market much sooner which would help to address the challenge of the housing crisis.

The Head of Corporate Revenues advised the committee that the changes would hopefully lead to behavioural change from owners of empty properties and explained that these premiums did not apply to empty properties of Registered Social Landlords. He also explained that guidelines were expected from the government which could inform the approach to empty properties which were for sale and rental properties vacant between tenancies. The committee was also informed that the New Homes Bonus applied to each empty, unfurnished property that was brought back onto the market.

In response to members' queries regarding empty properties under probate, the Head of Corporate Revenues advised that there were specific rules in these circumstances and that these tended to be exempt from the premium until probate

was awarded. Further information on this would be shared with members following the meeting.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer reiterated the importance of behaviour change as a result of the increased premium and the number of empty properties brought back into use would be monitored.

The Head of Corporate Revenues clarified that a behaviour change would involve empty property owners reletting properties and reducing the small number of 'phantom tenancies'.

Decision:

That the committee endorse the recommendations to the Executive.

RGSC/24/4 Anti-Poverty Budget Options

The committee considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer which identified the current budgets and support that the Council provided in delivering its Anti-Poverty measures, offered options for future Anti-Poverty provision and provided a suggested framework for describing ongoing Anti-Poverty provision and expected outcomes.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background to anti-poverty support measures;
- The work of Making Manchester Fairer and the Anti-Poverty Strategy;
- Anti-poverty budgets for 2023/24;
- Measures such as Council Tax Support, the Household Support Fund (HSF) and the Residents at Risk Cost of Living Group;
- Framework and options for 2024/25;
- Recommendations for the anti-poverty budget allocation; and
- The range of households supported by HSF and the projected spend at 31 March 2024.

Some of the key points and queries that arose from the committee's discussions included:

- Noting the likely end of HSF and the importance of communicating this to residents in a timely manner;
- When an announcement on Local Housing Allowance was expected;
- Querying the £968k underspend in the Cost-of-Living budget for 2023/24 and why residents were not presenting for support when needed;
- Whether more work was needed with sector organisations to promote the Discretionary Council Tax Support Payment scheme; and

- Whether targeted support could be provided to those in receipt of free school meals and the holiday activities programme in the event that HSF did not continue.

The Deputy Leader introduced the report and explained that it highlighted the Council's current anti-poverty spending and options for the future. She stated that this was a complex area and thanked officers for their work. She recognised that the cost-of-living crisis was ongoing and that residents were still feeling the impacts of this, with the Council prioritising support for residents whilst facing its own budgetary pressures. She expressed her concern that the government had not provided any indication that HSF would continue after March 2024, noting that this fund was vital to residents and in funding the Council's free school meals and holiday activities programme.

The Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services echoed concerns over the end of HSF and explained that 50% of the HSF budget was maintained for free school meal provisions in school holidays. He informed the committee that the Council would face a reduction of around £4.9m in resources if HSF was discontinued.

In response to members' points and queries on HSF, the Executive Member for Finance and Resources stated that the Leader of the Council was working with the Local Government Association (LGA) on this, and that Manchester MPs were going to table an item in Parliament to encourage the continuation of support. The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer recognised the significant impact of the discontinuation of HSF and stated that officers had begun to look at budget options in the event that HSF was continued.

The Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services emphasised that officers had started to model the impact of receiving a similar or reduced level of HSF and that they would continue to work closely with colleagues in the Communications team to inform residents of the support available.

The Head of Corporate Assessments informed the committee that indicative figures on the Local Housing Allowance had been received that week which suggested substantial increases. He stated that this was encouraging and had been welcomed by the Homelessness service as a move in the right direction. He noted that there would remain a gap between the LHA and rent prices but stated that the rise would moderate demand for Discretionary Housing Payments.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer explained that indicative LHA rates had increased to the thirtieth percentile of market rent prices and that further information would be shared when available.

The Head of Corporate Assessments explained that a lot of work had been undertaken in the previous 12 months to ensure an effective focus on the private rented sector. He explained that there had been an increase in demand for

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) within the social landlord and private rented sectors over a number of years. He stated that DHP was designed to provide short-term support for residents and that the Council sought to be creative in finding ways to maximise support. He recognised that communications would not reach every resident but that there was clear communication about the scheme. The committee was informed that the move to Universal Credit provided an added complexity, and it was recognised that more work was needed, particularly with colleagues in Neighbourhoods to raise awareness of the support available.

It was also acknowledged that communications about Discretionary Council Tax Payments would need to be shared imminently.

In response to a query regarding the possibility of providing targeted support to those in receipt of free school meals and the holiday activities programme, the Head of Corporate Assessments advised that the free school meals programme included a significant number of children and that providing targeted individual support would result in small payments that would have minimal impact. He emphasised that there were a number of support schemes available to those presenting in need, such as the Welfare Provision Fund and Section 17 payments. The committee was also advised that the Council would continue to provide free school meals during the Easter 2024 holiday because of when it fell in the calendar year.

Members were informed that any additional funding would be announced on 6 March 2024 in the Chancellor's next financial statement.

In summarising, the Executive Member thanked officers for their work, particularly those who delivered the HSF programmes, and the Chair echoed these sentiments on behalf of the committee.

Decision:

That the report be noted.

RGSC/24/5 Changes to Council Tax Support Scheme from April 2024

The committee considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer which proposed changes to the Council's Council Tax Support Scheme for Executive approval.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- The proposed change would mean that the Council Tax Support Scheme would pay up to 85% of the Council Tax bill leaving 15% to pay, compared to the current scheme of which paid up to 82.5% of the Council Tax bill leaving 17.5% to pay;
- It was also proposed to extend the CTS backdating period for working-age claims from 6 months to 12 months;

- A background to council tax in Manchester, including current and previous schemes;
- Costs of the proposed changes; and
- The approach, content and outcome of the consultation with precepting authorities.

Some of the key points and queries that arose from the committee's discussion included:

- Welcoming the proposals and recognising the positive outcomes of the public consultation;
- Whether there was any aspirations to amend the CTSS to pay up to 100% of council tax;
- Whether costs of backdating council tax arrears were factored into the new proposals;
- That CTSS only applied to the Council's portion of council tax and not precepting authorities and whether residents would still benefit; and
- The need for communication to make new Universal Credit claimants aware that they can apply for CTS.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources introduced the report and highlighted that the Council had committed to supporting residents through the cost-of-living crisis. He recognised that, whilst inflation rates were easing, residents continued to feel the impact of this. He explained that extending the backdating period would help to clear more council tax arrears for those facing financial difficulty.

The Head of Corporate Assessments reiterated that the proposals had been subject to a public consultation and an Equality Impact Assessment, which supported the recommendations of the report.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer advised that the service had many aspirations but there was a need to balance affordability. There was a current focus on increasing investment into council tax support whilst protecting measures such as breathing space and debt collection.

With regards the backdating, the Head of Corporate Assessment explained that a review of backdating spend in the previous year had been undertaken but noted that it was difficult to model this with confidence because many cases did not require backdating for a full 12 months. He stated that the biggest benefit would be the ability to respond to cases where a resident had not claimed CTS when it was needed.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer explained that the Council had not modelled the wider impact of CTS as it did not want to pre-empt any preceptor decisions of other authorities, such as Greater Manchester Combined Authority. It was confirmed that the Budget report for consideration in February would include a breakdown of council tax by precept and what this would mean for residents, including those on CTS.

In response to a point about communication, the Head of Corporate Assessments recognised the importance of ensuring that eligible residents received CTS and stated that this would be raised with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) as the first point of contact for Universal Credit claimants.

Decision:

That the committee endorses the recommendations to the Executive.

RGSC/24/6 Feasibility Study into Ending the Use of Enforcement Agents

The committee considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer which presented a feasibility study into whether the use of Enforcement Agents (EAs), also known as bailiffs, was an effective or proportionate method of collecting debt, following representations made by ACORN and Debt Justice at the committee's meeting on 7 September 2024.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- The use of EAs remained widespread across the UK, with all of the five most deprived Council areas in England, of which Manchester was one, referring cases to EAs where residents do not engage and all Greater Manchester Councils using EAs to recover Council Tax debt, with two GM authorities having an in-house team for this;
- Improved regulation of the EA industry since 2014;
- Considerable investment and improvements into debt collection practice and engagement with residents;
- Recovery processes prior to an EA visit;
- The importance of Council Tax to the Council;
- Representations from ACORN, with a response from the Council, and Debt Justice;
- Representation from the Civil Enforcement Association (CIVEA) in response to ACORN and Debt Justice;
- Representation from Citizens Advice Manchester; and
- Examples of the revised reminder and recovery letters sent to residents.

Some of the key points and queries that arose from the committee's discussions included:

- Welcoming the recommendations;
- Recognising the impact that losing 1% of council tax had on the Council's overall budget, but also recognising the cost of stress and health concerns arising from an EA visit;
- Acknowledging the dialogue between the Council, ACORN and Debt Justice; and

- If residents were still able to apply for Discretionary Council Tax Payments if they had a case passed to EAs in the past.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources introduced the report and explained that the use of EAs was a last resort. He stated that the report highlighted the Council's work over the last 18 years to ensure a reduction in the number of cases passed onto EAs and that the feasibility study had provided an opportunity to learn the experiences of other authorities and to examine the code of conduct for EAs. He thanked the organisations that provided representations and stated that council tax amounted to 30% of the Council's revenue budget and funded key services such as Children's and Adults Social Care. He stated that a 1% reduction in the amount of council tax collected would equate to a loss of £2.73m in revenue, which the Council could not afford against a backdrop of government budget cuts.

The Chair acknowledged the cooperation of ACORN, Debt Justice and Citizens' Advice in the preparation of the report and stated that their contributions had influenced the Council's approach to the collection of Council Tax, for example, in the rewording of the various letters that were sent to residents where Council Tax was overdue.

The Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services echoed thanks to ACORN and Debt Justice and stated that reducing the number of cases passed to EAs was a key priority and achievement of the service. He highlighted policy changes and work to encourage residents to contact the Council as soon as possible if they struggled to pay their council tax. This included writing off costs for those who engaged with the Council, creating longer payment arrangements, allowing breathing space for arrears payment and the Discretionary Council Tax Payment scheme.

The Chair invited Richard Dunbar of Debt Justice to address the committee. Richard advised that his organisation welcomed the recommendation before the committee and acknowledged the financial challenges facing local authorities like Manchester. However, he stated that the knock-on effect of receiving a visit from an enforcement agent equated to costs of £6m to mental health services. He stated that the Ministry of Justice planned to increase enforcement fees by 5% which he believed would create a commercial incentive for EAs to collect debt to the detriment of residents. He called on the committee to amend the motion before them to recommend that it was not appropriate for any case where the resident was eligible for any level CTS to be referred to EAs and agrees that recovery via an attachment of benefits is more appropriate, including for those currently in receipt of maximum CTS.

The Chair sought officers' views on the suggested recommendation. The Head of Corporate Revenues stated that he was largely in agreement with the amendment but that it would need to be looked at in more detail. The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer concurred with this and stated that a final approval could be sought through the budget-setting.

The committee also received a verbal representation from Alison Aitken of ACORN.

In response to a comment regarding the lateness of the report, the City Solicitor agreed that it was important for reports to be received promptly and she advised that this report was being finalised up until the point of publication. The Executive Member for Finance and Resources highlighted that late reports were not out of the ordinary and that this report had been impacted by the lateness of the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, which meant that additional work was required to ensure the figures in the report were accurate.

Confirmation was also provided that a person was still able to apply for Discretionary Council Tax Payments if they had a case passed to EAs against them in the past.

The Head of Corporate Revenues emphasised the need for residents who may be struggling to pay to engage with the Council, who could signpost to any available support. He stated that leaflets had been created to promote this and were available for members of the committee to take away and share with their communities.

The committee was also advised that the Council monitored complaints about EAs closely and a mapping exercise of enforcement agents' behaviour against the Council's code of practice had been implemented. The Head of Corporate Revenues also asked ACORN to encourage their members to report any instances of poor conduct amongst EAs as this would drive improvement.

In response to comments regarding rising enforcement fees, members were informed that fees were to be increased for the first time since 2014.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer welcomed the ongoing dialogue with ACORN and Debt Justice and expressed her thanks to officers for their valuable work. She emphasised the importance of revenue generated through council tax and highlighted that some of those refusing to pay council tax could afford to do so.

The Chair stated the recommendation before the Committee was to continue with the use of EAs, which he felt only fair to the vast majority of Manchester residents who paid their Council Tax bills without the need for any enforcement. He highlighted that the Council's use of enforcement agents had reduced significantly over the last few years and that there was extensive support available for those least able to pay. He also stated that EAs mainly focused on those residents who simply refused to engage in any discussion regarding payment of their Council Tax, which included a significant number of residents on salaries in excess of £40k per annum.

Decision:

That the committee

- notes the contents of the report and thanks ACORN, Debt Justice and Citizens Advice Manchester (CAM) for their challenge and contributions;

- notes 1% drop in the in-year collection rate of Council Tax represents a reduction of £2.73 million in the Council's revenue;
- the committee recommends that the City Council continues to use EAs in the collection of Council Tax against individual residents;
- recommends that it is not appropriate for any case where the resident is eligible for CTS to be referred to EAs and agrees that recovery via an attachment of benefits is more appropriate, including for those currently in receipt of maximum CTS;
- recommends that further consideration is given to implementing the recommendations made by CAM;
- recommends that the Council continues to review its use of Enforcement Agents in the recovery of Council Tax debt and monitors any other solutions employed by other authorities; and
- recommends that the Council continues to participate in any consultation undertaken with regards to the regulations governing Council Tax.

RGSC/24/7 Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2024/25 and Budget Assumptions

The committee considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer which provided an update on the main announcements from the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2023/24 which was announced on 18 December 2023.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background to the Finance Settlement;
- Manchester's Core Spending Power (CSP) would increase by £41million;
- Changes to business rates, including the introduction of a standard business rating multiplier;
- Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Relief and the New Homes Bonus would continue for a further year;
- Social Care grants were largely in line with expectations;
- The Services Grant had been cut by 84%;
- Implications of these announcements on the Council's budget; and
- Next steps and conclusions.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources introduced the item and explained that the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement was received late and worse than the Council had anticipated. He stated that the potential budget gap for 2024/25 had increased to c. £5million, compared to a £1.6m gap which was previously expected. He noted that in-year pressures, particularly around Adult Social Care, meant that the Council was increasingly reliant on the use of reserves. He highlighted that the Provisional Finance Settlement allocated some extra monies for adult social care and public health but that this did not go far enough to compensate for the reduction of the Service Grant.

He recognised that several local authorities in England had served Section 114 notices and stated that the Local Government Association was monitoring other authorities at risk of this due to pressures felt by councils nationally and in the context of 14 years of government-imposed austerity. He stated that the Council would continue to lobby government and identify the most efficient way to maximise resources and he expressed his desire for a change in government.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer reiterated the disappointing outcome of the Settlement but stated that officers were focused on next steps in the budget process. She advised that some funding rebates were expected from GMCA and work was ongoing to identify ways to close the budget gap. She expressed her confidence that a balanced budget for 2024/25 would be proposed for consideration by the committee in February.

In discussing the item, a member highlighted the cumulative budget cuts to the Council since the beginning of austerity measures and the impact of this.

Decision:

That the committee endorses the recommendations to the Executive.

RGSC/24/8 Sales, Fees and Charges - Budget 2024/25

The committee considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer which provided an update on the current work being undertaken to review all sales, fees and charges as part of the 2024/25 budget process to ensure that charges were correct, that the costs of providing the services were recovered, and to identify opportunities for increasing existing budgets in order to support the overall Council 2024/25 budget.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Providing an overview of sales, fees and charges in the current financial year;
- The review process and proposed price increases for 2024/25 by service;
- £1m of additional income budgets as a result of this exercise would contribute to achieving a balanced budget; and
- Future opportunities and risks.

Some of the key points and queries that arose from the committee's discussions included:

- Noting that some charges, particularly in bereavement services, were to be confirmed but should not be increased significantly;
- Charges to residents who sell a property of which the Council was the freeholder;
- Suggesting that the £0.674m shortfall from off street car park charges should not be marked as green in the RAG rating in the budget papers; and

- The waste and pest control fees, which were still to be agreed, and whether these would be increased by 5%.

The Deputy City Treasurer explained that the report aimed to provide greater transparency and visibility of the Council's sales, fees and charges. He stated that these fees were increased to support service delivery and this was important given the financial pressures facing the authority.

The Head of Finance (Corporate Core, Neighbourhoods, Growth and Development) explained that a review of sales, fees and charges formed part of the overall budget-setting process and highlighted that income generation could be variable and impacted by factors outside of the Council's control. He stated that the review had assessed the Council's income budget in addition to existing prices and activity levels and tried to identify future prices against a backdrop of the ongoing cost-of-living crisis. He advised that work was ongoing in some services to assess the impact of fee increases and that this would form part of the final budget proposals for consideration in February.

In response to members' queries, the Head of Finance (Corporate Core, Neighbourhoods, Growth and Development) reiterated that work on fee increases for bereavement services was ongoing and that the service was assessing the implications of activity levels and demand in addition to prices. This would be confirmed in the budget paper in February.

The Head of Finance (Corporate Core, Neighbourhoods, Growth and Development) confirmed that charges for buying a freehold from the Council were included under the wider investment estate. He stated that the Growth and Development directorate had a wider Estates service with a wide-reaching remit over building leases, rentals, assets and freehold payments. The Strategic Lead (Development) explained that these payments related to consent or fees for profession work and no income was derived from the sale of a property.

In response to a comment about the RAG rating for car park underspends, the Deputy City Treasurer acknowledged this and explained that car park usage had increased in recent months despite changes in working habits.

The Head of Finance (Corporate Core, Neighbourhoods, Growth and Development) confirmed that a decision was still to be made on waste and pest control fees but this would be increased up to a maximum of 5%.

The committee was also advised that, going forwards, a detailed report on sales, fees and charges would be provided on annual basis as part of the budget-setting process, which members welcomed.

Decision:

That the report be noted.

RGSC/24/9 Overview Report

The committee received a report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit which provided details of key decisions that fell within the Committee's remit and items for information previously requested by the Committee. The report also included the Committee's work programme, which the Committee was asked to amend as appropriate and agree.

Decision:

That the report be noted.

RGSC/24/10 Commercial Activity, Investments and Governance (Part A)

The committee considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer which provided an overview of the governance and assurance activity which took place before, during and post completion of the Council's commercial transactions.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background to the Council's commercial activity;
- The work of the Commercial Board, including directorship training and the Due Diligence Framework;
- The regulation of commercial activity;
- Public Interest and Best Value Reports; and
- Risk management.

The Head of Commercial Governance, Assurance and Initiatives stated that commercial governance was more important than ever given the budgetary and regulatory context that local authorities were operating in. She stated that Manchester City Council had established a robust, transparent and accountable structure to ensure appropriate oversight, monitoring and reporting of its commercial portfolio.

In response to a member's query regarding reported high energy costs facing the Council, the Head of Commercial Governance, Assurance and Initiatives explained that steps had recently been taken to provide security through green energy and budgetary benefits through the Power Purchase Agreement, which was approved by Executive in December 2023. She also confirmed that a full response had been provided to Manchester Evening News' enquiry about high energy costs.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer explained that figures on energy costs initially included VAT which had been claimed back. She highlighted that the Council had retendered its energy contracts at the start of the war in Ukraine and that the budget proposals showed significant savings as a result of the retendered electricity contract and the gas contracts would be in a similar position soon.

Decision:

That the report be noted.

RGSC/24/11 Exclusion of Press and Public**Decision:**

That the press and public be excluded during consideration of the following item which involved consideration of exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of particular persons and public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

RGSC/24/12 Commercial Activity, Investments and Governance (Part B)

The committee considered a confidential report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer which provided further detail to the Part A report on the Council's commercial activities, including, but not limited to, provision of loans to third parties, Joint Ventures, investments into a range of initiatives and property transactions.

The committee discussed the structure, financing, and terms of these arrangements. As part of these discussions, a further report on Manchester Life was requested and officers endeavoured to bring this to the committee in the new municipal year.

Decision:

That the report be noted.

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Constitution and Nomination Committee –31 January 2024
Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee – 8 February 2024

Subject: Elections Act Duties Progress Report

Report of: The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer and the City Solicitor

Summary

To outline the planning, and governance arrangements for the implementation of existing and new duties within the Elections Act 2022 for Manchester. This includes developing extensive engagement and producing an Elections Outreach Pack.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to note:

- The ongoing work to implement promotion of the Voter ID scheme and increased accessibility for elections.
 - The implementation and challenges of the second tranche of duties from the Elections Act, including online absent voter registration, changes to the process for overseas voting and changes to proxy and postal votes delivered to a polling station.
 - To outline the work of the Electoral Services Unit in developing an Elections Outreach pack and a wider dissemination strategy fully supported by the Council's Neighbourhood Teams and the Communications Team.
 - The plans for a statutory Polling Districts Review and impacts on the Annual Canvass.
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Wards Affected: All

<p>Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city</p>	<p>The legislative changes brought about by the Elections Act have had a slightly negative impact on achieving the zero-carbon target across the city. This includes a greater number of polling stations required across the city to handle longer transaction times and more staff travelling across the city to work in stations, some of which are required to use their cars for the role they carry out on polling day. There is a greater deal of paperwork required in stations to capture voter information to report back to the Department for Levelling Up,</p>
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	<p>Housing & Communities (DLUHC) and the Electoral Commission. The Electoral Services unit are aware of the impacts the Elections Act changes will bring and will continue to actively try to reduce the impact wherever possible. For example, much of the Elections Outreach Pack will be issued by email and placed online, though there will be some paper copies to assist those who are impacted by digital exclusion, and to place on public building noticeboards.</p>
<p>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - the impact of the issues addressed in this report in meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty and broader equality commitments</p>	<p>An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) was undertaken for the May 2023 local elections, and it will be undertaken again for the 2024 elections. The Electoral Services Unit has engaged closely with the Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Team over its content.</p> <p>Voter Authority Certificates (free Voter ID requests), new Online Absent Voting Applications and new Overseas Voting Applications will be completed via a new Government Portal and has not been included as part of the Equality Impact Assessment as this is not a site or process that the Electoral Services unit have control over. The Electoral Services Unit is using its Electoral Outreach Pack to advertise and promote applications to these systems, and support residents who find them challenging or who are currently digitally excluded.</p>

Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS/Contribution to the Strategy
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	<p>The Our Manchester Strategy sets out the vision for the city to 2025.</p> <p>Local elections provide the opportunity for eligible Manchester residents to elect Councillors to represent them and therefore to influence how the strategy is delivered.</p>
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	

Full details are in the body of the report, along with any implications for:

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Risk Management
- Legal Considerations

Financial Consequences – Revenue

The introduction of the Electoral Integrity Programme places a burden on the local authority in various ways, including, for example, the additional time administrative staff will need to process applications for Voter Authority Certificates and online absent (postal and proxy) voting and overseas voting portals, additional equipment that may be required for some offices or polling stations, and additional poll clerks / presiding officers (and training of them) that will need to be employed for polling day. DLUHC are responsible for providing funding for this additional burden.

Funding is being provided through a hybrid approach comprising of grant payments and Justification Led Bids (JLB). Grants will enable a proportion of the allocation to be distributed via a single grant payment. Justification Led Bids will release funds retrospectively based on the evidence of spend. Below is an outline of expenditure provided to date on the Elections Act:

Tranche 1 duties on Voter ID and Accessibility -

Grants received from government	- £238,404.00
Council spend on Voter ID & Accessibility	- £362,313.40
Justification Led Bid (JLB) submission for	- £123,909.40 (an outcome on this bid is awaited from the government)

Tranche 2 duties on Online Absent Voting Applications and Overseas Voting -

Grant already received for OAVA/Overseas - £25,616.00

Further grant expected - unknown

The Government's Justification Led Bid (JLB) submission window will be open again following the polls in May 2024.

At this stage it is difficult to project the additional costs with any certainty however it is anticipated that the grants and the payments received from the JLB will not cover the full costs of the implementation of the Elections Act.

Financial Consequences – Capital

None

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy, please contact one of the contact officers above.

- Statutory Instruments – Tranche 2 Voter ID Laid in October 2023
- Elections Act Implementation Timeline
- Fact sheets from Manchester Elections Outreach Pack – these are also on the Manchester City Council website at this link – https://www.manchester.gov.uk/info/500329/elections/8664/elections_outreach_resources
- Electoral Commission report on the May 2023 election – <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/elections-and-referendums/our-reports-and-data-past-elections-and-referendums/report-may-2023-local-elections-england>

- All-Party Parliamentary Group on Democracy and the Constitution report on Voter ID - <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/6033d6547502c200670fd98c/t/64ff05b5797e5a2707ddf3fb/1694434746644/VID+Inquiry+Report+FINAL.pdf>
- Local Government Information Unit report on the impact of voter ID – the views of electoral administrators - <https://lgiu.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/The-impact-of-voter-ID-the-views-of-administrators.pdf>
- Letter from Parliamentary Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Select Committee to the UK Government on Voter ID, 10 November 2023 - <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/41955/documents/208978/default/>

1.0 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The Elections Act 2022 has been introduced to make new provision for and amendments to existing electoral law. The current UK Government claims the Act will ensure that UK elections remain 'secure, fair, modern, inclusive, and transparent'. It also allows the government to meet its 2019 manifesto commitments in this area of policy.
- 1.2 A significant number of different legislative changes relating to both electoral registration and the delivery of elections are coming into effect in stages throughout 2023 and 2024. These changes had an impact on the delivery of the Local Elections in May 2023, and will likely impact on the Local and Mayoral Elections in May 2024, and the next UK Parliamentary Election, which could happen any time up until January 2025. These changes place significant additional responsibilities and resourcing pressures on the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) and Returning Officer (RO), and the local authority in its widest sense.
- 1.3 The changes that were implemented at the May 2023 local election included:
 - Voter ID – Requirement for voters attending at polling stations to show an approved form of photo ID before a ballot paper is issued.
 - Accessibility Provisions – These relate to the requirement to provide reasonable equipment to assist voters with disabilities in polling stations.
- 1.4 The Electoral Services Unit provided the committee with an initial update on the impacts of these duties in its report of 22 June 2023. A further update is outlined in Section 2.1 and 2.2 below.
- 1.5 Further provisions of the Elections Act come into effect from the end of October 2023 and will impact on the 2 May 2024 local and mayoral elections, and these include:
 - Enabling electors to apply online for an absent vote through a national portal, with both online and paper applications requiring the applicant's identity to be verified (implemented at the end of October 2023)
 - Requiring postal voters to reapply every three years, replacing the current rules of refreshing their signature every five years (implemented at the end of October 2023)
 - Further limit to the number of people an elector may act as proxy for (implemented at the end of October 2023)
 - Restricting the handling of postal votes – political campaigners will no longer be permitted to handle postal votes, and the number of postal votes an individual can hand in at a polling station will be limited (implemented at the end of October 2023 and will be in place for 2024 elections)
 - Allowing all British citizens living overseas to vote in UK Parliamentary elections, regardless of when they left the UK, with applications required to be updated every 3 years (implemented January 2024).

- 1.6 After the May 2024 combined election, the final duty of the Elections Act 2022 will come into place. The post-May period will allow Electoral Services to complete important statutory governance arrangements. This includes:
- European Union (EU) citizens voting - a review of the eligibility to vote in local elections for some EU citizens who moved to the country after the UK left the European Union
 - A statutory Polling District Review alongside the Annual Canvass of electors.
- 1.7 This report provides an overview of progress with delivering all of these legal duties. An identical version of this report will also be shared with the Constitution and Nomination Committee being held on 31 January 2024 for information purposes.
- 1.8 The report will also outline in section 4 the wider activity of the Electoral Services Unit in responding to these duties through the development of an Elections Outreach Pack and important engagement with a range of communities in the city.
- 1.9 These changes have had an impact on the timing of a Statutory Polling Districts Review, which is now planned to start through the summer and autumn 2024. The timing of the UK Parliamentary Election in 2024 / 5 may also impact on the review, which must take place no later than January 2025.

2.0 Review of progress with the duties that were implemented in May 2023

2.1 Voter ID

- 2.1.1 The Voter ID requirements came into place for the May 2023 local election. This required voters to show an approved form of photo ID at polling stations before a ballot paper was issued. It also created a national portal to register for a Voter Authority Certificate (VAC) for those electors who do not possess any of the accepted forms of ID. The Electoral Services Unit print out and send these VACs to all electors who successfully apply for them.
- 2.1.2 From the launch of the VAC portal at the end of January 2023, 1,058 Manchester residents applied for a VAC prior to the May 2023 local election. This was significantly less than was expected or modelled for, with calculations showing that as many as 7,000 residents in the city who do not possess the accepted form of ID and need to apply for a VAC. There has been a slow increase in VAC applications following the elections. By the end of December 2023 there had been an additional 179 VAC applications since the May local election.
- 2.1.3 As there are parts of the UK that did not have local elections in May 2023, such as London, Birmingham, Bristol, all of Scotland and Wales, the Electoral Commission will repeat its national campaign to publicise the Voter ID scheme from January 2024. A local communications campaign will reiterate the need

for people to apply to this scheme if they do not have an accepted form of photo ID.

2.1.4 At the May 2023 local election, 1,649 electors in Manchester came to a polling station either without the correct photo ID or no ID. Of this number, 1,060 electors returned with ID and voted, but **589 potential electors did not return and did not then vote at the election**. Nationally, in the 230 Councils who held elections in May 2023, the Electoral Commission calculated that just over 14,000 electors who wanted to vote were unable to do so due to not possessing the correct photo ID or a VAC.

2.1.5 In their September 2023 final report reviewing the local elections the Electoral Commission noted that older voters, younger voters, disabled voters, unemployed voters, voters in poorer districts of towns and cities, and minority ethnic community voters had been proportionately negatively affected by the implementation of voter ID. On Voter ID the Commission's report recommended:

- The UK Government should review the current list of accepted forms of Voter ID to identify any additional documents that could be included to improve accessibility for voters. The focus should be on ID that would support people who are least likely to have the documents on the current list, including disabled people and those who are unemployed.
- The government should explore whether the deadline for Voter Authority Certificate applications could be moved closer to polling day, to extend its availability for voters who do not have any other form of accepted ID to apply for a VAC.
- The government should enable registered voters who do have accepted ID to make an attestation at their polling station on behalf of someone who does not have any form of accepted ID (also referred to as 'vouching' and used in countries like Canada, which was also recommended by the UK Parliamentary All-Party Group on Democracy and the Constitution).
- Polling station staff should still collect data on the impact of voter ID at future elections.

2.1.6 The UK Government provided its response to the Electoral Commission's recommendations in December 2023 that it did not see the need to expand the list of acceptable Voter ID or bring in the concept of vouching. There will be no changes to the existing duties for elections in 2024.

2.2 Accessibility

2.2.1 Along with voter ID, another duty that came into force for the May 2023 local election was for Returning Officers to provide "equipment for relevant persons to vote independently". As a result, the Electoral Services Unit provided at all polling stations equipment to assist disabled electors and those electors where English was not their first language. This included a large sample copy of ballot paper, a tactical voting device, braille copies of the ballot paper, temporary ramps, additional seating, magnifiers, accessible polling booths,

accessible stationery, parking spaces (where available) for disabled voters, temporary doorbells, hearing loops and audio versions of ballot papers.

2.2.2 Other considerations that were also provided included:

- Guides about voting and what assistance is available – including easy read / web versions.
- Key documents in polling stations were translated into 22 community languages, with additional connections to the national ‘Language Line’ service.
- A message on poll cards for voters that required it to request adaptations / equipment from the Electoral Services Unit.

2.2.3 As part of its engagement process, that is discussed in more detail in section 4 below, the Electoral Services Unit has twice engaged with the Manchester Disabled Persons Forum Sounding Board after the local election. There was positive feedback on the accessible provisions in polling stations, with some useful suggestions for improvements. A number of these enhancements for 2024 elections are being developed, as noted in section 4 below.

2.2.4 In reference to accessibility, the Electoral Commission recommended that levels of awareness of the support and equipment available, especially in polling stations, is still lower than it could be. They have encouraged Election Teams to be pro-active in engaging with disabled people groups, which the Electoral Services Unit are doing.

2.3 Companions of disabled voters

2.3.1 From the 4 May 2023 poll, disabled voters who make a declaration in the polling station that they require assistance, will be able to bring any person over the age of 18 as a companion to assist them to cast their vote, thus removing the requirement of being registered to vote. This duty went smoothly at the May polls.

2.4 Community Engagement and Communications for 2023 and 2024 elections

2.4.1 In order to support the changes outlined for May 2023, a comprehensive communications and engagement campaign was developed and took place from January 2023 (when VAC applications were launched) to the day of poll.

2.4.2 The EC held a four stage national communications and engagement campaign for the 2023 local elections campaign to raise awareness of the Voter ID duty. Their research calculated that 87% of the public were aware of the Voter ID and accessibility changes by the week of the poll. The EC are undertaking a similar campaign in 2024. Staff from the Council’s Communications Team have been engaging with the EC over the media buying, assets and reach of this campaign in 2024.

2.4.3 For the 2023 local election (and being implemented for the 2024 local and mayoral elections), a consistent GM wide approach to amplify and

complement the EC's national campaign was organised. This seeks to ensure that key messages are consistently disseminated widely across Greater Manchester, with each local authority contributing a proportion to purchase GM wide advertising channels to supplement Electoral Commission messaging at a local level. This campaign is led by Manchester City Council's Communication Team.

- 2.4.4 This campaign for both elections in 2023 and 2024 includes making EC partner materials accessible to a wider audience, for example, additional language translations and/or accessible formats. Effective local engagement activity was also developed in 2023 and has been developed in 2024 at a neighbourhood level, utilising local knowledge and local community networks via Neighbourhood Teams, to ensure engagement with underrepresented groups and key target audiences. This has been complemented with the development of an Elections Outreach Pack and significant engagement with a range of communities as outlined in section 4 below.
- 2.4.5 The 2024 local campaign will again mirror the EC's campaign timings and will take place over the next few months.
- 2.4.6 A GM wide channel plan has been drafted to ensure consistent coverage across local channels in all 10 local authority areas. A Manchester specific channel plan will sit alongside this with a focus on Manchester only advertising sites, digital channels, community networks, free and partner channels.
- 2.4.7 A communications plan has been drafted and the approach shared and discussed with GM colleagues. The Local and Mayoral Elections 2024 communications approach is being developed and it will be tabled at the meeting.

2.5 Governance and Capacity

- 2.5.1 A Strategic Elections function was established in 2022, based at Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), to provide the 10 Greater Manchester districts and GMCA with specialist knowledge and dedicated strategic resource for 2023 and 2024. The purpose of this function is to provide GM authorities with the knowledge and understanding to prepare for the extensive and complex legislative changes arising from the implementation of the Elections Act 2022, including voter ID requirements, overseas electors', and online postal vote applications. In addition, the wider implications arising from the Dissolution and Calling of Parliament Act 2022 and the outcomes of the current Parliamentary Boundary review which has created the following constituencies in Manchester – Blackley and Middleton South, Gorton and Denton, Manchester Central, Manchester Rusholme, Manchester Withington, and Wythenshawe and Sale East.
- 2.5.2 An Elections Act Steering Group has been in place since June 2022 to provide support to the Elections team through 2023 and 2024. This group contains senior staff from wider services to support this work including HROD, ICT, Comms, Neighbourhoods, PRI, Risk and Finance, working through the

significant interdependencies that exist across the different workstreams to ensure these are reflected in the thinking. As part of wider work, the Elections Strategic Lead for Greater Manchester is also in attendance at this Steering Group focusing on areas where close joint working arrangements are desirable for consistency. These meetings are co-chaired by the City Solicitor and the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer.

- 2.5.3 The resource requirements in the core elections team have been strengthened with an additional resource of 6 staff to support the work required. Core staff numbers remain under review, whilst work continues to try and predict the volume of work that will be created by the introduction of the new Tranche 2 measures. In addition, a 'bank' of internal MCC staff have been recruited to provide additional capacity and assist with managing peaks in demand as and when required, for example in the 6-week election period. Whilst the bank staff were not required for the 2023 local election, there is a greater likelihood they will be needed for the May combined election and the UK Parliamentary election (and even more so if it is a triple poll). They are being trained on all aspects of the Elections Act and in readiness for supporting the Electoral Services Unit should that be deemed necessary.
- 2.5.4 In both the 2023 and 2024 elections, a number of resources to aid with local engagement will be provided to electors. These include:
- A printable leaflet for voters (translation into some community languages)
 - A summary 2-sided leaflet
 - A guide for staff and volunteers
 - Posters and social media assets
- 2.5.5 The staffing requirements for the 2024 polls are currently under review, taking into consideration an increase of polling stations to 242 (as in 2023) across the city due to the anticipated increase of transactions times, hence more staff required. As is usual practice, staff who have previously worked in elections are being contacted and allocated to roles. Staff have been notified of the May 2024 poll via Broadcasts, encouraging staff members without a role to get in touch. Staff from partner organisations are also being contacted, such as GMCA and the NHS.
- 2.5.6 As Elections is a corporate priority it is a requirement for staff to work or be available if necessary. For this reason, staff are made aware that leave should not be booked for both the polling day and the official counts. A withdrawal process will be in place for exceptions, which is managed by HR in conjunction with Strategic Leads.

3.0 New Elections Act duties that have come into force since the May 2023 local election

3.1 Online Absent Voting Applications (OAVA)

- 3.1.1 In addition to voting in person, registered voters have the option to alternatively vote by post or nominate a proxy to vote on their behalf. This was

previously undertaken using by completing paper applications sent and returned to the Electoral Services Unit. From November 2023, a new government portal based at the website <https://www.gov.uk/apply-postal-vote> allows registered voters to now apply online.

- 3.1.2 Registered voters would need to have to hand the address where they are registered to vote, their date of birth and their National Insurance number (if they do not have their National Insurance number, they will be required to provide another document to verify their identity). They will also need to indicate the specific date of the election or referendum they want to make a postal vote for, if it is only for a one-off postal vote (otherwise they will be deemed a postal or proxy voter for all subsequent elections). As part of this process, voters also need to upload a photo of their handwritten signature in black ink on plain white paper. If voters cannot provide a signature or one that always looks the same, they may be able to apply for a postal vote signature waiver within the service.
- 3.1.3 This system is being encouraged by the government for all new voters, but the existing paper application system can also be used by electors who prefer it. **It is important to note, if an elector already has a postal or proxy vote arrangement in place they do not need to reapply.** As part of this change, electors applying for a postal vote will be required to renew their application and their signature every 3 years, instead of every 5 years. Existing proxy voters who have an arrangement in place before 31 October 2023 must reapply and make a fresh application by 31 January 2024 – the Elections Team have written to all of these voters. Proxy voters can undertake this by sending in a paper application to the Electoral Services Unit or can apply to vote by proxy at this website - <https://www.gov.uk/apply-proxy-vote>. Testing the service has brought up some challenges for those who have permanent proxy status, which has been communicated to the government.
- 3.1.4 Since this duty came into place, from 1 November 2023 – 2 January 2024, 395 postal applications have been made, 126 in paper form and 269 using the government online portal. Of these applications 90 are on hold awaiting further evidence. In discussions with colleagues across the ten Greater Manchester local authorities, and with the Association of Electoral Administrators, there has been some concerns raised over the time it is taking to process some of the applications, along with challenges in uploading signatures from the government portal to the Council's Xpress electoral management system, and the time this may take closer to the election. These concerns are being raised with the government, who are introducing more enhancements to the portal. Elections team and bank staff are being trained to use the new portal and transfer information to the Xpress system, in its current state, making relevant adjustments as improvements are released.
- 3.2 Postal Vote handling rules
- 3.2.1 Following legislation that came into place in December 2023 as part of the Elections Act, the government have legislated that from the elections in May 2, 2024, representatives of political parties and campaigners will not be able to

handle completed postal votes and postal vote envelopes from individual voters and deliver them to polling stations on polling day. Voters can only hand in their own postal vote plus the votes of up to five family members or people for whom they provide regular care. Family members include an individuals' spouse, civil partner (either in a civil partnership or living together), parent, grandparent, brother, sister, child or grandchild.

- 3.2.2 Voters will not be allowed to hand in more than six postal ballot packs (that's five postal packs in addition to their own). They will have to complete a form at the polling station to verify the number of packs being handed in, including their own pack.
- 3.2.3 Political parties have been informed of this important change. The government have deigned it as a criminal offence if representatives of political parties or campaigners seek to deliver postal votes to the polling station.

3.3 Overseas Voting changes

- 3.3.1 From January 2024, important changes around voting rights for British citizens living overseas come into place. The major change is that there will no longer be a 15 year limit on voting rights, and the registration period will change. The registration period for these voters will be extended from one year to three, and as such overseas voters will only need to register to vote every three years.
- 3.3.2 Under the change made in the Elections Act, any British citizen living abroad who has previously lived in, or been registered to vote in the UK, will have the right to vote at UK Parliamentary elections. These voters will be registered at the constituency where they were last registered to vote, or where they were last resident if they were not registered to vote before. Such voters will have to provide evidence of living at a Manchester address, or to seek an attestation from another registered voter of good standing to support their application.
- 3.3.3 In Manchester, prior to this duty there were 611 registered overseas voters. It is impossible to say how many additional overseas voters will seek to register for the UK Parliamentary election, but it could be considerable, particularly given the imminence of that election. The Electoral Services Unit has received full training on the new government portal for overseas voters (postal and proxy voting paper requests are still also permitted) and will keep a close eye on the level of applications. Bank staff will also be trained to use the new portal if they are required due to larger than anticipated numbers of applicants.

3.4 Changes to Parliamentary Boundaries and impact on Polling District Review

- 3.4.1 An order to put new Parliamentary Boundaries into place came into force in November 2023, but the new constituencies will only come into effect when the next UK Parliamentary election is called. If a byelection takes place before this election it will be held under the existing constituencies and not the new constituencies.

3.4.2 As reported to the committee in June 2023 the new constituencies that will be in place at the next UK Parliamentary election in Manchester are:

- **Blackley and Middleton South** (taking in the existing Manchester wards of Charlestown, Crumpsall, Harpurhey, Higher Blackley and Moston, as well as the Rochdale Council wards of East Middleton and South Middleton).
- **Gorton and Denton** (taking in the existing Manchester wards of Burnage, Gorton & Abbey Hey, Levenshulme and Longsight, as well as the Tameside Council wards of Denton North East, Denton South and Denton West).
- **Manchester Central** (taking in the existing Manchester wards of Ancoats & Beswick, Cheetham, Clayton & Openshaw, Deansgate, Miles Platting & Newton Heath and Piccadilly, as well as the Oldham Council wards of Failsworth East and Failsworth West).
- **Manchester Rusholme** (taking in the existing Manchester wards of Ardwick, Fallowfield, Hulme, Moss Side, Rusholme and Whalley Range).
- **Manchester Withington** (taking in the existing Manchester wards of Chorlton, Chorlton Park, Didsbury East, Didsbury West, Old Moat and Withington).
- **Wythenshawe and Sale East** (taking in the existing Manchester wards of Baguley, Brooklands (Manchester), Northenden, Sharston and Woodhouse Park, as well as the Trafford Council wards of Brooklands (Trafford), Priory and Sale Moor).

3.4.3 The Electoral Services Team have provided a Memorandum of Understanding with Oldham, Rochdale, Tameside and Trafford Council over cooperation around delivering the elections for these new constituencies. Manchester will be the designated Acting Returning Officer for each of the cross-boundary constituencies.

3.4.4 Discussions have taken place within the Elections Steering Group and the AGMA Elections Managers Group over the timing of the UK Parliamentary election, which could potentially be held on the same day as the local and mayoral election, or at another date at any point up to January 2025. This will remain a live discussion throughout 2024. When the government calls such an election, there will only be a maximum 25 days' notice to deliver it. It is very likely that bank staff would be called upon to support the Elections Team in a triple poll scenario. Discussions have already started with Manchester Central Convention Centre (MCCC) with regards to the possible availability of space for a count venue should an election be called at short notice. Conversations are also taking place with senior officers across Manchester City Council, looking at alternative count venues, should MCCC not be available in its entirety for a general election that is not held in May.

3.4.5 As noted in its report to the Constitution and Nomination Committee meeting of 12 July 2023, initial consideration was given to holding an interim review of polling districts, beginning in mid-July 2023 and ending in late November 2023. However, following internal legal advice and information from the

Election Commission it was decided to postpone this option due to the complexity of undertaking such a review when amended parliamentary boundaries have not been implemented until November 2023. As such a statutory polling district review is now due to take place after the May elections. Such a review must take place no later than January 2025. An October 2024 UK Parliamentary election could create some complexity with undertaking this review, along with the Annual Canvass. The Electoral Services Unit will keep the Constitution and Nomination Committee updated around the review.

4.0 Engagement work May 2023 to present date

4.1 With the Electoral Services Unit having more time after the May 2023 local election to engage directly with communities, it has developed a comprehensive strategy to interact with a wide range of groups over summer and autumn 2023. This has included the establishment of an Elections Act Forum and the development of an Elections Outreach Pack. As part of this activity, engagement has taken place with the Council's Neighbourhoods and Communications Teams to add renewed focus to this work. At the heart of this activity is to disseminate detailed elections information to community groups, to seek helpful feedback and to encourage key messages to be shared widely across Manchester.

4.2 The Elections Outreach Pack is a series of ten short 2 – 3 page factsheets on all aspects of the Elections Act and electoral registration. These include information on the following areas relevant for public dissemination:

- The core changes affecting the public from the Elections Act.
- Information on Voter ID and applying for a VAC.
- Information for voters on increased accessibility at polling stations.
- Ways the Council is seeking to support all parts of the community in the electoral process.
- Information on polling stations and where they are located.
- How to register for elections.
- How to register as an anonymous elector (for example for women voters avoiding domestic violence) on the electoral register.
- Outlining the changes to Parliamentary constituencies and encouraging early electoral registration, given the short time to register once a UK Parliamentary election is called.
- Explaining the different services of Manchester City Council, Greater Manchester Combined Authority and the UK Government that voters elect councillors, the Mayor and MPs to work on their behalf of.
- Explaining the new Online Absent Voting Application.

4.3 The pack is being made available as paper copies and as electronic digital copies. They have also been placed on the Council's website, are being translated into a number of the most commonly used community languages and a generic 'easy read' summary is being developed for those that need them. Mention is made on the fact sheets to contact the Council's Digital Inclusion team to assist registration and relevant applications. Manchester is

the first Council to develop such a detailed pack, and these fact sheets are being shared with colleagues in the other 9 Greater Manchester local authorities and the Electoral Commission.

- 4.4 The Electoral Services Unit has engaged across all core community sectors in the city to alert them to the new Elections Outreach Pack, to seek feedback on the major changes to the electoral process, and to cooperate with groups where possible and practical. The groups that have been directly engaged with can be found in Appendix B.
- 4.5 Whilst existing resources makes it difficult to go to community events, there has been some engagement with the likes of the Manchester Youth Council, the Wythenshawe 'Community Connectors' event and the MACC Community Fairs. The Elections Team have also established an Elections Act Forum which met on October 10 to explain the detail behind the Elections Outreach Pack and encourage the groups noted above to pro-actively disseminate information through their communities. The Forum will also include an email conduit for ongoing information, and it met again on 17 January 2024 and (resource permitting) in early March 2024 to provide relevant updates.
- 4.6 The valuable contacts that this process has provided to the Electoral Services Unit will also deepen the quality of an Equalities Impact Assessment being developed for the elections in 2024 (which will enhance it further from the assessment made in 2023). To give some practice examples, a number of initiatives are being developed following discussion with disabled groups to provide easy read documents, understand the needs of blind and neurodiverse voters, develop animation and videos to assist understanding of the changes in elections, and the Elections Team are looking into creating a core message in a video format in a number of community languages.
- 4.7 The other aim of this work, particularly through the Elections Act Forum, is to explain to groups that the intense activity of organising the three elections of 2024 means the Elections Team does need to rely on other groups in assisting with community dissemination throughout 2024.
- 4.8 The Elections Outreach Pack was also sent out to all elected members in December 2024. The Elections Team encourages all councillors to promote the fact sheets through local community groups. Neighbourhood Services and Communications have developed a spreadsheet to try and capture as much community engagement as possible, and the Elections Team have an ongoing spreadsheet to record all the engagement they make across community groups.

5.0 Changes that are expected to come into force after the May elections

- 5.1 The final duty of the Elections Act relates to EU residents that have come to the UK since the country left the European Union. The Elections Act removes the rights of some EU citizens to vote and stand in elections in England and Northern Ireland. The changes apply to local and mayoral elections in England. EU citizens where the UK Government has negotiated agreements

with EU Members States to allow its citizens living in the UK to vote, in return for the same right for UK citizens living in that country, will still be able to vote and stand in elections. To date these agreements have been made with Spain, Portugal, Luxembourg and Poland. Residents from the Republic of Ireland are not affected by this change due to a long-standing arrangement between the UK and Irish governments.

5.2 This duty will come into place after the May elections and the Electoral Services Unit are preparing to contact all relevant citizens that this impacts from the electoral register.

5.3 As noted above, the statutory Polling Districts Review will also take place after the May elections and continue until November, ready for the publication of a new register in December 2024.

6.0 Recommendations

6.1 The recommendations to the Committee are contained on page 1 of this report.

7.0 Appendices

Appendix 1 - Communications and engagement campaign for 2024 (to follow)
Appendix 2 - List of groups engaged with for Manchester Elections Outreach Pack

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List of groups engaged with for Manchester Elections Outreach Pack

- MACC (community and voluntary sector support organisation for Manchester) in central, north and south Manchester to engage with smaller community groups
- Our Manchester VSCE team
- Manchester Neighbourhood Services Area Teams and Libraries
- Manchester Youth Services, Education Department and Area Youth Teams
- Manchester Parks and Leisure Centres
- The University of Manchester, Manchester Metropolitan University, and the larger colleges of further education
- Age Friendly Manchester
- Manchester Disabled People's Forum Community Sounding Board
- Manchester Care Leadership Board
- Armed services / veterans contacts at the Royal British Legion and Walking with the Wounded
- Manchester City Council Corporate Equalities Leaders Group
- Caribbean and African Health Network and Community Sounding Board
- South Asian Community Sounding Board
- Manchester City Council Race Equality Network
- Manchester Homelessness Service and Manchester Homelessness Partnership
- LGBT Foundation and Manchester City Council LGBT staff network
- Manchester Women's Aid and the Pankhurst Centre
- Manchester City Council Muslim Staff Network and the Faith Network for Manchester
- The Manchester City Council Trades Union Network.

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**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee - 8 February 2024

Subject: A new Our Manchester Strategy 2025-2035

Report of: Assistant Chief Executive

Summary

This report describes the background to and process of creating a new Our Manchester Strategy for the city.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to consider and comment on the proposed process for developing a new Our Manchester Strategy

Wards Affected: All

Environmental Impact Assessment -the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city	None directly – however the new OMS will include themes and priorities relating to the city’s zero carbon target.
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - the impact of the issues addressed in this report in meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty and broader equality commitments	An equality impact assessment (EqIA) has been completed for the development and engagement process with supportive feedback from the council’s Equalities Team. Recommendations made were to be more specific in naming the people, groups and organisations that we need to connect with which is something that officers are working on with both internal and external colleagues.

Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the Our Manchester Strategy/Contribution to the Strategy
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	Not relevant.
A highly skilled city: world class and home-grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	Not relevant.
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	Not relevant.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	Not relevant.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	Not relevant.

Full details are in the body of the report, along with any implications for:

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Risk Management
- Legal Considerations

Financial Consequences – Revenue

None.

Financial Consequences – Capital

None.

Contact Officers:

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 Position: Head of City Policy
 Telephone: 0161 234 1541
 E-mail: david.houlston@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Peter Norris
Position: Strategy and Economic Policy Manager
Telephone: 0161 234 1038
E-mail: peter.norris@manchester.gov.uk

Background documents (available for public inspection):

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy, please contact one of the contact officers above.

- *Our Manchester Strategy – Forward to 2025*, Full Council (March 2021)
- *Manchester Strategy 2016 – 2025*, Full Council (January 2016)

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Our Manchester Strategy is the ten-year strategy for the city. It shows where we want to get to and how we will get there. Officers are beginning work on the next Our Manchester Strategy for 2025 to 2035. This starts with a period of intensive engagement with people across the city to inform its contents. At this early stage in the development process, there is an opportunity for members of this committee and members more widely to shape the process, and make sure we are listening to as wide and as a diverse an audience as possible.

2. Background

- 2.1. The Our Manchester Strategy (OMS) was originally developed in 2015 and launched in 2016. It set out the city's overarching 10-year vision and strategic priorities. The development of the OMS was overseen by the Manchester Leaders' Forum, now the Our Manchester Forum, a partnership board of 40 leaders from Manchester's public, private and voluntary sector. The Our Manchester Forum remains in place today to provide governance around the implementation and progress of the strategy.
- 2.2. In May 2020, the Executive agreed to undertake a reset of the Our Manchester Strategy 2016 – 2025. This was to reflect upon progress made in the first half of the Strategy's implementation, and to assess new and existing challenges. This work was also undertaken as part of the Council's COVID-19 recovery planning. The reset strategy, known as *Our Manchester: Forward to 2025*, was adopted by Full Council in March 2021.
- 2.3. Since its adoption *Our Manchester: Forward to 2025* has guided the city's overall direction and informed development and delivery of all the Council's work. As the strategy is now approaching the end of its life, we need to begin work on the next Our Manchester alongside our partners and stakeholders to create a new vision for the next ten years.

3. What is Our Manchester?

- 3.1. The OMS is the overarching strategy for the city, not just the City Council, with the current version running to the start of 2025. It states what we want the future of Manchester to be, and how we plan to get there, with all people and organisations playing a role in making it happen. The current version of the OMS is structured under five themes:
 1. Thriving and sustainable
 2. Highly skilled
 3. Progressive and equitable
 4. Connected
 5. Liveable and zero carbon
- 3.2. Individual priorities under these themed are delivered by the Council and our partners and stakeholders around the city. The structure of the OMS provides

the foundations for the Council's wider policy and strategy framework, with connections across one or more OMS themes. Recent examples include our Economic Strategy, Housing Strategy and Making Manchester Fairer.

- 3.3. As well as the strategy itself, Our Manchester describes a set of behaviours and an approach to working that is inclusive, collaborative, and trusting. The Our Manchester Behaviours are codified for MCC staff, and employees are expected to demonstrate them in their work. These are not within scope of the development of the new strategy.

4. Progress to 2025

- 4.1. Manchester has come a long way since the original OMS was adopted, and at the same time has responded to some significant external events and challenges, demonstrating the resilience of the strategy itself and the partnerships and networks around it.

- 4.2. Manchester is known world-wide for great things like creativity in the arts, sport and science, to our tolerance, warm welcomes and talent for having a good time. In recent years our high-profile achievements include:

- Local Government Chronicle Council of the Year 2022
- Time Out Top Ten must-visit city, 2024
- English National Opera's new HQ
- Aviva Studios, home of Factory International – landmark new cultural space for Manchester and the world
- Top shopping and Christmas market attractions
- Co-op Live – UK's biggest venue floorspace opens in 2024
- Michelin restaurant guide 2024 winners' awards – Midland Hotel
- Chanel international catwalk venue 2023
- ACES Capital of Cycling 2024
- UEFA Euro 2028 match host – Etihad Stadium

- 4.3. Manchester's growing international standing is boosting our local economy too, bucking the UK trend and outgrowing every other UK city. Our workforce attracts investment from all over the world, allowing our city to invest more in services and projects to benefit everyone in line with our commitment to become zero-carbon by 2038.

- 4.4. As we've grown – despite Covid and the cost-of-living crisis – Manchester has managed to keep the basics on track and deliver people's priority services:

- 72,000 more workers in the city between 2015 and 2022
- 90% of primary schools and 80% of secondary schools classed 'good' or 'outstanding'
- 45% of residents now have a degree
- only 10% of our residents have no qualifications
- fewer children in care – 1,385 in 2023 – and child protection plans halved since 2018, bucking the national trend

- 25,000 new homes built in the city since 2015 and over 12,000 under construction
- 36,000 new homes planned to 2032, 10,000 affordable, 3,000 in the city centre.

4.5. At the same time there are still issues where we need to improve, and the new OMS will not shy away from addressing these challenges. These include:

- Over 59,000 children in Manchester were growing up in poverty in 2022, the third highest rate nationally (45%)
- 23% of Manchester residents in work are paid less than the Real Living Wage
- Around one in five households have less than £30 per month disposable income after paying for essentials.
- Falling life expectancy, more so than the national average. Life expectancy in Manchester is now 74.8 years for males and 78.7 for females against 78.7 years and 82.8 years for males and females nationally.
- Worst health outcomes in the country in terms of premature deaths related to heart, lungs and cancer
- Still almost 3,000 households in temporary accommodation despite reductions

5. The development process

5.1. Officers will undertake a mixed methods approach that utilises extensive listening and engagement activity, supported by other research and data analysis. The current timeline for development is:

Date	Activity
January 2024	Internal and limited external engagement with key partners to refine the development process and approach
February – May 2024	Citywide engagement activity Desktop research and data work
May – July 2024	Analysis of information collected Production of early themes and priorities Report on engagement to all 6 Scrutiny Committees
August 2024	First draft of full strategy
August – September 2024	Consultation on draft strategy
September 2024	Production of the final text
October 2024	Final design work Executive approvals process begins
November 2024	Strategy discussed at all 6 Scrutiny Committees Final OMS adopted by Executive and Full Council
December 2024	Launch & celebration event

5.2. The aims for our citywide engagement activity are to run the best possible engagement process in terms of:

- The overall visibility and reach of the engagement campaign
- The response from diverse people and communities
- The quantity of responses
- The quality of responses

5.3. To do this, our approach will be to:

- Draw on the resources that are already available to us and our partners, including other recent consultation and engagement work. This includes examples such as the current Culture Strategy, Making Manchester Fairer, and the Housing Strategy
- Have conversations directly with residents, partners and stakeholders in different settings and locations around the city.
- Make use of activities that are already planned over the listening and engagement period, including those of our partners, to help us speak to more residents.
- Equip our partners and stakeholders with the tools to have conversations on our behalf.
- Have an open access online component that anyone can respond to at any time.

5.4. All engagement activity will be supported by an ongoing, multi-channel comms campaign led by Corporate Communications. Direct engagement activity with residents will consist of both a universal element and a targeted element. For the engagement taking place through to the end of May, both elements will begin with broad and open-ended questions that guide respondents to consider what they think a future Manchester should be like. Questions include:

- What makes you proud of Manchester?
- What should Manchester do next – or do more of – to make its mark on the world stage?
- What do you want Manchester to be like in the future?
- If you could do one thing to make Manchester better, what would it be?
- How can Manchester make this one thing happen?

5.5. In person engagement methods will be varied and will specifically target the people and places that we know we struggle to reach. Engagement activities will be designed and delivered in a way that is culturally competent and sensitive to the circumstances of residents and communities. Officers are taking forward several ideas to make this the most inclusive engagement process possible:

- Officers have been engaging with neighbourhood teams, elected members, and partner organisations in Manchester to refine the proposed approach to engagement. This has resulted in useful, supportive and positive feedback that endorses the current plan.

- Officers will be equipping partners to have conversations on our behalf, recognising that MCC staff are not always best placed to have these conversations. We are also exploring commissioning some voluntary and community sector organisations to run Our Manchester engagement sessions with their own service users.
- We will appoint Our Manchester Ambassadors, people who are trusted and known in their communities, to drive engagement in those communities, equipping them with the tools and training to undertake this role. OM Ambassadors may be MCC Staff of trusted external partners.
- Staff networks will be engaged across the Council
- Officers will run pop-up engagement events at locations across the city to promote the process and speak to people in person. Venues could include libraries, markets, health centres, community centres, shopping centres, places of worship and sports facilities.

5.6. The communications campaign that will support the work will continue throughout the engagement period, meaning that people should see and hear about it from multiple sources, increasing opportunities for engagement. At the time of writing the final creative concept is being finalised but will retain much of the “look and feel” of the current OMS brand, which already recognisable and well known, and which will help create a sense of continuity from the current strategy to the new one.

5.7. Development is overseen by a Corporate Steering Group made up of senior officers together with direct input from the Leader and Chief Executive. Officers are regularly consulting with external partners and stakeholders about the development and engagement process itself, so we can ensure that the proposed model is right for Manchester.

6. Conclusion and next steps

6.1. The process of developing a new Our Manchester Strategy will be high profile and important in setting the strategic direction for the whole city, not just the city council. The proposed approach will ensure that we are able to listen to and capture as broad a range of views as possible.

6.2. Following the initial engagement period, officers will report back to Scrutiny Committees in July 2024 on the outcome of the engagement process. The final strategy will be brought back to Committees in November 2024 in advance of going to Executive and Full Council later in the same month.

7. Recommendations

7.1. To consider and comment on the proposed process for developing a new Our Manchester Strategy.

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee – 8 February 2024

Subject: Overview Report

Report of: Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit

Summary

This report provides the following information:

- Recommendations Monitor
- Key Decisions
- Work Programme
- Items for Information

Recommendation

The Committee is invited to discuss and note the information provided and agree the work programme.

Wards Affected: All

Contact Officer:

Name: Charlotte Lynch
Position: Governance and Scrutiny Team Leader
Telephone: 0161 219 2119
E-mail: charlotte.lynch@manchester.gov.uk

Background documents (available for public inspection):

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy, please contact one of the contact officers above.

None

1. Monitoring Previous Recommendations

This section of the report contains recommendations made by the Committee and responses to them indicating whether the recommendation will be implemented, and if it will be, how this will be done.

There are currently no outstanding recommendations.

2. Key Decisions

The Council is required to publish details of key decisions that will be taken at least 28 days before the decision is due to be taken. Details of key decisions that are due to be taken are published on a monthly basis in the Register of Key Decisions.

A key decision, as defined in the Council's Constitution is an executive decision, which is likely:

- To result in the Council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the Council's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates, or
- To be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the area of the city.

The Council Constitution defines 'significant' as being expenditure or savings (including the loss of income or capital receipts) in excess of £500k, providing that is not more than 10% of the gross operating expenditure for any budget heading in the in the Council's Revenue Budget Book, and subject to other defined exceptions.

An extract of the most recent Register of Key Decisions, published on **29 January 2024**, containing details of the decisions under the Committee's remit is included below. This is to keep members informed of what decisions are being taken and, where appropriate, include in the work programme of the Committee.

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Decision Due Date	Consultation	Background documents	Officer Contact
Corporate Core					
Adopting new powers to increase the Council Tax on some empty properties (2023/01/09A) To consider whether or not to charge double Council	Executive	15 Feb 2023		Report to Executive	Charles Metcalfe, Head of Corporate Revenues charles.metcalfe@manchester.gov.uk

<p>Tax on empty furnished properties (including second homes) and empty, unfurnished properties that have been empty for between 1 and 2 years from 1 April 2024 onwards.</p>					
<p>Irish World Heritage Centre - Loan re-financing and restructuring (2023/05/15A)</p> <p>To agree to the restructuring and refinancing of existing loan finance arrangements to ensure that there is an affordable and sustainable agreement in place between the Council and the Irish Diaspora Foundation Limited.</p>	<p>City Treasurer (Deputy Chief Executive)</p>	<p>Not before 13th Sep 2023</p>		<p>Part B report to the Executive</p>	<p>Sarah Narici, Head of Programme Office sarah.narici@manchester.gov.uk</p>
<p>TC979 Archival Storage, Non-Archival Storage and Scanning Framework (2023/06/08C)</p> <p>The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer agrees to the appointment of providers to supply Archival</p>	<p>City Treasurer (Deputy Chief Executive)</p>	<p>Not before 8th Jul 2023</p>		<p>Report and recommendation</p>	

Storage, Non-Archival Storage and Scanning Services following a competitive tender exercise.					
<p>Enterprise Resource Planning Software (2023/10/06A)</p> <p>To award a contract for new Enterprise Resource Planning software to support finance, HR, procurement and related functions.</p>	City Treasurer (Deputy Chief Executive)	Not before 3rd Nov 2023		Report and Recommendation	Tom Wilkinson, Deputy City Treasurer tom.wilkinson@manchester.gov.uk
<p>Council Tax Balance for 2023/24 (2023/11/3B)</p> <p>Agree the estimated council tax surplus or deficit for 2023/24</p>	City Treasurer (Deputy Chief Executive)	Not before 3rd Dec 2023		Council Tax Balance report	Neil Doherty, Group Finance Lead - Revenue neil.doherty1@manchester.gov.uk
<p>Business Rates Balance for 2023/24 (2023/11/3C)</p>	City Treasurer (Deputy Chief Executive)	Not before 3rd Dec 2023		Business Rates Balance report	Neil Doherty, Group Finance Lead - Revenue neil.doherty1@manchester.gov.uk
<p>Council Tax Base for 2024/25 (2023/11/3D)</p>	City Treasurer (Deputy Chief Executive)	Not before 3rd Dec 2023		Council Tax Base report	Neil Doherty, Group Finance Lead - Revenue neil.doherty1@manchester.gov.uk

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Business Rates Base for 2024/25 (2023/11/3E)	City Treasurer (Deputy Chief Executive)	Not before 3rd Dec 2023		Business Rates Base report	Neil Doherty, Group Finance Lead - Revenue neil.doherty1@manchester.gov. uk
Award for gas supply contracts from existing Framework Agreement TC473 (2024/01/15A) This call off will be to enter into agreement with the UK gas supplier awarded Manchester's "Supply of Gas" Framework Agreement, (TC473), to supply gas to MCC's corporate estate, as well as to Manchester schools, colleges and academies (subject to prior SLA agreement). This decision is intended be taken using the urgency procedure due to the fact that markets will refresh hourly throughout a typical call-in period, meaning	City Treasurer (Deputy Chief Executive)	Not before 12th Feb 2024		Report and Recommendation	Christopher Watkins Christopher.watkins@manchester.gov.uk

<p>rates offered would not stay valid for long enough to complete the call-in process. This will be discussed and agreed with the Scrutiny Chair and Executive Member for Finance and Resources prior to this agreement.</p>					
<p>Public Buildings Maintenance Contract (2024/01/22A)</p> <p>To extend the Public Buildings Maintenance Contract by up to 3 years to be co-terminus with the Housing Repairs and Maintenance Contract</p>	<p>City Treasurer (Deputy Chief Executive)</p>	<p>Not before 20th Feb 2024</p>		<p>Report and Recommendations</p>	<p>Jared Allen, Director of Capital Programmes jared.allen@manchester.gov.uk</p>
<p>Development and Growth</p>					
<p>39 Deansgate Speakers House - Granting of over-riding lease (2022/04/12A)</p> <p>Approval to the granting of over-riding lease for 250 years with additional land to facilitate redevelopment of the site, as consented under planning application</p>	<p>Strategic Director (Growth and Development)</p>	<p>Not before 11th May 2022</p>		<p>Confidential report and recommendations</p>	<p>Ken Richards, Principal Development Surveyor ken.richards@manchester.gov.uk</p>

131314/FO/2021					
<p>Disposal of site of former Chorlton Leisure Centre for residential development (21/05/13A)</p> <p>Approval to the terms for the leasehold disposal of the site of the former Chorlton Leisure Centre for residential development.</p>	Strategic Director (Growth and Development)	Not before 3rd Jul 2023		Report to the Strategic Director of Growth and Development	Mike Robertson, Principal Development Surveyor mike.robertson@manchester.gov.uk
<p>Restructure of existing multiple ground leases at Manchester Science Park into a new overriding single head lease (2021/07/16A)</p> <p>Restructure of existing multiple ground leases at Manchester Science Park into a new overriding single head lease.</p>	Strategic Director (Growth and Development)	Not before 1st Sep 2023		Report and recommendations	Mike Robertson, Principal Development Surveyor mike.robertson@manchester.gov.uk
<p>Disposal of the former Gala Bingo, Rowlandsway, Manchester, M22 5RS (2022/05/19A)</p> <p>Approval to the terms for the leasehold disposal of</p>	Strategic Director (Growth and Development)	Not before 19th Jun 2022		Report to the Strategic Director of Growth and Development	Joe Martin, Senior Development Surveyor joe.martin@manchester.gov.uk

the former Gala Bingo, Rowlandsway, Manchester, M22 5RS.					
Land at Kelbrook Road (2022/11/14A) Approval to dispose of land at Kelbrook Road for development	Strategic Director (Growth and Development)	4 Jan 2023		Report to the Strategic Director – Growth & Development	Thomas Pyatt, Senior Development Surveyor Tel: 0161 234 5469 thomas.pyatt@manchester.gov.uk
Disposal of land at the back of Ancoats, Manchester (2023/03/23A) To approve the disposal of land bounded by Naval Street, Radium Street, Poland Street and Jersey Street	Strategic Director (Growth and Development)	23 Apr 2023		Briefing Note	Bhavesh Chauhan, Principal Development Surveyor bhavesh.chauhan@manchester.gov.uk
The disposal of land at Store Street Manchester (2023/04/25A) To approve the disposal of land at Store Street, Manchester.	Strategic Director (Growth and Development)	Not before 25th May 2023		Briefing Note	
Factory International Works (2023/06/28A) To approve capital funding for Factory International for	Executive, City Treasurer (Deputy Chief Executive)	26 Jul 2023		Report to Executive	Rebecca Heron, Strategic Director (Growth and Development) rebecca.heron@manchester.gov.uk

works to achieve static completion					
<p>Promotion Agreement for disposal of land (2023/06/29A)</p> <p>To approve the terms agreed for entering into a promotion agreement to dispose of land for residential development</p>	Strategic Director (Growth and Development)	Not before 28th Jul 2023		Delegated approval report to the Strategic Director of Growth and Development	Mike Robertson, Principal Development Surveyor mike.robertson@manchester.gov.uk
<p>Disposal of Elizabeth Yarwood Court, Kincardine Road, Manchester, M13 9SY (2023/07/24A)</p> <p>Approval of terms for disposal of site to facilitate commercial development</p>	Strategic Director (Growth and Development)	Not before 22nd Aug 2023		Report to the Strategic Director of Growth and Development	Joe Martin, Senior Development Surveyor joe.martin@manchester.gov.uk
<p>Disposal of land at Upper Brook Street, Manchester, M13 9XH (2023/07/24B)</p> <p>Approval of terms for disposal of land to facilitate mixed use development.</p>	Strategic Director (Growth and Development)	Not before 22nd Aug 2023		Report to the Strategic Director of Growth and Development	Joe Martin, Senior Development Surveyor joe.martin@manchester.gov.uk
<p>Disposal of land at Hinchley Road, Charlestown, Manchester,</p>	Strategic Director (Growth and	Not before 21st Sep 2023		Report and Recommendation	

<p>M9 7FG (2023/08/21A)</p> <p>Approval to the freehold disposal of land at Hinchley Road for residential development.</p>	<p>Development)</p>				
<p>Land at 1-7 Gorton Road, M11 (22/08/2023A)</p> <p>Grant a Deed of Variation to the existing lease of land that will consent to subletting and change of use.</p>	<p>Strategic Director (Growth and Development)</p>	<p>Not before 22nd Sep 2023</p>		<p>Report & Heads of Terms</p>	
<p>Disposal of land at Carmoor Road, Manchester, M13 0FB (2023/09/13A)</p> <p>Approval of terms for disposal of land to facilitate development of Purpose Built Student Accommodation.</p>	<p>Strategic Director (Growth and Development)</p>	<p>Not before 12th Oct 2023</p>		<p>Report to the Strategic Director of Growth and Development</p>	<p>Joe Martin, Senior Development Surveyor joe.martin@manchester.gov.uk</p>
<p>Disposal of Land at Lord North Street (2023/10/12A)</p> <p>To agree the disposal of land at Lord North Street on a 250-year leasehold interest to facilitate</p>	<p>Strategic Director (Growth and Development)</p>	<p>Not before 12th Nov 2023</p>		<p>Delegated Decision Report to Head of Development and Director of Strategic Housing & Development</p>	

redevelopment for employment use.					
<p>Disposal of land at the former Central Retail Park site (2023/11/07A)</p> <p>Approval to the disposal of c5.5 acres of the site.</p>	Executive	17 Jan 2024		Report of the Strategic Director of Growth and Development	David Norbury, Strategic Lead Development City Centre david.norbury@manchester.gov.uk
<p>Disposal of land at the junction of Moorcroft Road and Sledmoor Road, Brooklands, Wythenshawe (2023/11/14B)</p> <p>Approval of terms for disposal of land to facilitate affordable residential development.</p>	Strategic Director (Growth and Development)	Not before 13th Dec 2023		Report to the Strategic Director of Growth and Development	Jamie Ferguson, Development Surveyor Jamie.ferguson@manchester.gov.uk
<p>Acquisition for Leasehold Investment, Holt Town (2023/11/14C)</p> <p>Approval to the acquisition of a Leasehold Investment for the purposes of Land Assembly re Holt Town NDF</p>	Strategic Director (Growth and Development)	Not before 12th Dec 2023		Report to the Strategic Director (Growth and Development)	
Neighbourhoods					

TC1101 - RentSense Data Analytical Service (2023/12/08A)

To appoint a supplier to provide software which will aid the recovery of rent arrears.

Deputy City Treasurer

Not before 13th Dec 2023

Report & Recommendation

Peter Schofield, Head of Integrated Commissioning and Procurement
peter.schofield@manchester.gov.uk

3. Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee - Work Programme – January 2024

Thursday 8 February 2024, 10:00am (Report deadline Monday 29 January 2024)

Item	Purpose	Executive Member	Strategic Director/Lead Officer	Comments
Elections Act 2022 Update	To receive an update on the position of Tranche 2 changes that have been implemented following the Elections Act 2022, including changes to absent voting, postal vote handling and a timescale for future changes.	Cllr Craig (Leader)	Fiona Ledden Clare Travers	
Our Manchester Strategy	To receive a report on the scope of the refreshed Our Manchester Strategy.	Cllr Craig (Leader)	James Binks	
Public Buildings Maintenance Contract	To receive a report on the extension of the Public Buildings Maintenance Contract by up to 3 years to be co-terminus with the Housing Repairs and Maintenance Contract.	Cllr Akbar (Finance and Resources)	Carol Culley Richard Munns	
Revenue Budget Update and Corporate Core Budget Proposals 2024/25	To receive and consider the final 2024/25 budget proposals that will go onto February Budget Executive and Scrutiny and March Council.	Cllr Akbar (Finance and Resources)	Carol Culley Tom Wilkinson Paul Hindle	
Housing Revenue Account 2024/25 to 2026/27	To receive a report on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget for 2024/25 and a refresh of the 30-year business plan.	Cllr White (Housing and Development)	Carol Culley Tom Wilkinson Dave Ashmore	
Overview Report	The monthly report includes the recommendations monitor, relevant key decisions, the Committee's work programme and any items for information.	N/A	Scrutiny Support	

Monday 26 February 2024, 10:00am – BUDGET (Report deadline Wednesday 14 February 2024)

Item	Purpose	Executive Member	Strategic Director/Lead Officer	Comments
The Council's Budget 2024/25	To receive an update on the Council's financial position following scrutiny of the draft budget proposals and Directorate budget plans by all Scrutiny Committees.	Cllr Akbar (Finance and Resources)	Carol Culley Tom Wilkinson	

Thursday 7 March 2024, 10:00am (Report deadline Monday 26 February 2024)

Item	Purpose	Executive Member	Strategic Director/Lead Officer	Comments
Manchester Heat Network Business Plan Update	To receive a performance update and the 2023/24 business plan for the Manchester Heat Network Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV), which is wholly owned by the Council. This report will also outline the SPV's approach to securing new customers to the network and the decarbonisation of the asset.	Cllr Akbar (Finance and Resources) Cllr Rawlins (Environment and Transport)	Carol Culley Tom Wilkinson Sarah Narici	Deferred from January 2024 with Chair's approval.
Manchester City Council Connections with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority	To update the committee on Manchester's connections with GMCA in terms of partnerships, governance, and financial arrangements.	Cllr Craig (Leader) Cllr Akbar (Finance and Resources)	Carol Culley James Binks Tom Wilkinson	

(GMCA)				
Manchester City Council Connections with the Greater Manchester Integrated Care System and the Manchester Locality	To update the committee on Manchester's links with the Greater Manchester Integrated Care System, including governance and financial arrangements.	Cllr Akbar (Finance and Resources) Cllr T Robinson (Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care)	Carol Culley James Binks Tom Wilkinson	
Major Contracts Update	To receive an in-depth update on the Council's key contracts, its approach to procurement of these contracts and assessments of how to source contracts due for renewal and/or extension. The committee also previously requested that this include information on each major contract and whether insourcing would be viable.	Cllr Akbar (Finance and Resources)	Peter Schofield Mark Leaver	
Progress on Council Motions over last 12 months	To receive an update on the progress made in respect of motions that have been passed before Manchester City Council since the last update in March 2023.	Councillor Craig (Leader) Councillor Rahman (Statutory Deputy Leader)	Fiona Ledden	
Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) System	To receive a report on the Enterprise Resourcing Programme, which is also going to Executive.	Cllr Akbar (Finance and Resources)	Carol Culley Tom Wilkinson Jake Austin	
Overview Report	The monthly report includes the recommendations monitor, relevant key decisions, the Committee's work programme and any items for information.	N/A	Scrutiny Support	

4. Items for Information

At the meeting on 9 January 2024, members queried if the Council collected council tax on properties that were empty whilst under probate. The following response has been provided:

If a property has been left unoccupied since the date of death of the deceased person who was formerly liable as the owner or tenant, an exemption applies. This exemption, class F, applies for as long as the property remains unoccupied or until the land registry has been updated with the name of the new owner.

Note: Any short occupation of less than six weeks from the date of death is disregarded.

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