

Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 11 October 2018

Present:

Councillor Hacking (Chair) – in the Chair
Councillors Andrews, Cooley, M Dar, Evans, Fletcher-Hackwood, Kirkpatrick, Rawlins and Rawson

Also present:

Councillor S Murphy, Deputy Leader
Councillor Rahman, Executive Member for Schools, Culture and Leisure
Councillor Richards, Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration
Councillor Taylor, Assistant Executive Member for Schools, Culture and Leisure
Councillor Holt, Lead Member for Intergenerational Issues

John Haines, Project Skate Park
Phil Murphy, Levenshulme Old Library
Steve Conway, Community Asset Transfer Specialist
Martin Preston, Macc
Sarah Whitelegg, Macc
Dave Moutrey, Director and Chief Executive of HOME and Director of Culture for Manchester City Council
John McGrath, Manchester International Festival
Jennifer Cleary, Manchester International Festival
Claire Tomkinson, Macc

CESC/18/37 Minutes

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 6 September 2018 as a correct record.

CESC/18/38 Community Asset Transfers

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director (Development), the Head of Corporate Estates and Facilities, the Strategic Lead (Parks, Leisure and Events), the Strategic Lead (Neighbourhoods - South) and the Community Asset Transfer Manager on Community Asset Transfers. It provided information on the Community Asset Transfer activity during 2017/18, a background to the scheme and the process for progressing a Community Asset Transfer, and the support that was provided to groups by the Council.

The Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration referred to the main points and themes within the report, which included:

- The programme of support available to groups;
- The process for Community Asset Transfers;

- Potential future improvements; and
- Case studies.

The Committee also received a report of Martin Preston and Sarah Whitelegg from Macc on Community Asset Transfers.

Sarah Whitelegg referred to the main points and themes within Macc's report, which included:

- Macc's observations of the process, as the organisation contracted to provide support to Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) groups in Manchester;
- Macc's initial recommendations for improving and supporting Community Asset Transfers in Manchester; and
- Good practice in other parts of the country.

Some of the key points that arose from the Committee's discussions were:

- At what point Ward Councillors were involved in the process;
- What the savings were for the Council due to no longer being responsible for the maintenance costs of the buildings and to request a cost benefit analysis;
- How it was determined which groups paid a peppercorn rent and which paid a reduced commercial rent;
- To request further information on situations where groups did not proceed with a Community Asset Transfer as they felt they lacked the capacity to continue;
- Whether the Council had a list of its assets; and
- What information the Council had on the condition of its assets.

The Community Asset Transfer Manager outlined the process, advising that it typically took about 18 months and that his team recognised the importance of involving Ward Councillors at an early stage. He advised that the Council had created a formula to assess the average saving per building and that this had showed that the savings were approximately £28,000 per building but he reported that this varied greatly depending on the individual building. Martin Preston informed the Committee that Bradford City Council had developed a cost benefit analysis of Community Asset Transfers. The Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration advised that she and officers would look into the cost benefit analysis and come back with further information.

The Community Asset Transfer Manager advised that VCS organisations which were delivering commissioned services on behalf of the Council paid a reduced commercial rent (usually about 30% of the full commercial rate) and that groups which were not delivering commissioned services paid a peppercorn rent. He advised that some of the issues which influenced organisations not to proceed included the time it would take to administer the asset and the condition of the building, for example, if major work was required. He reported that the decision not to proceed was usually made by mutual consent between the VCS group and the Council as the challenges became clear while the business plan was being developed.

The Head of Corporate Estates and Facilities updated Members on the ongoing work to assess and record the condition of the Council's building assets, which, she advised, should be completed within two years. She informed Members that the Council held a list of all its assets electronically and that Members could be provided with training to be able to use this database to see details of assets in their ward. The Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration reported that the Members Development service had emailed Members regarding training on the database.

Phil Murphy outlined the process for the Community Asset Transfer of Levenshulme Old Library, including the costs involved and the benefits to the community.

John Haines informed Members about his experience of the Community Asset Transfer of the skate park. He described the problems his organisation had previously encountered in obtaining funding because it did not have a lease on the land used for the skate park. He reported that, following the Community Asset Transfer, this was now a sustainable skate park, that usage had tripled and that having the lease had enabled them to obtain significant further funding to expand. He informed Members that, when undertaking a cost benefit analysis, it was important to consider other benefits such as community cohesion and additional spending in the city from people travelling from elsewhere to use the skate park.

Decision

To note the report.

[Councillor M Dar declared a disclosable pecuniary interest as an employee of Community on Solid Ground and withdrew from the room for this item.]

[Councillor Fletcher-Hackwood declared a personal interest as an unpaid Trustee of Fallowfield Library.]

CESC/18/39 Widening Access and Participation Update

The Committee received a report of the Chief Operating Officer (Neighbourhoods) which provided an update on work to understand resident engagement in services provided by Leisure, Libraries, Galleries and Culture and to explore routes to increase participation among groups or communities that might be less engaged. The report also provided information about leisure's approach to 'poverty proofing'.

The Executive Member for Schools, Culture and Leisure referred to the main points and themes within the report, which included:

- Data improvement;
- Wider access for under-represented groups;
- Examples of recent initiatives in the different service areas;
- Communication and resident engagement; and
- Next steps.

Some of the key points that arose from the Committee's discussions were:

- The work of Age Friendly Manchester (AFM) Culture Champions;

- The condition of playing fields in parks;
- Request for further information on the conversations which were due to take place with Manchester Health and Care Commissioning (MHCC) in relation to Arts and Leisure;
- Request for ward level data of the people obtaining MCR Active cards and using the leisure facilities;
- That poverty proofing services was not just about the cost of tickets for events or activities but also the cost of transport to venues; and
- Barriers affecting disabled people's access to leisure facilities and to request a further report focusing on protected characteristics.

The Executive Member for Schools, Culture and Leisure recognised the value of the work of AFM and its Culture Champions in ensuring older people were aware of what was going on in the city and felt welcome to participate. The Sport and Leisure Lead updated Members on work to improve playing pitches and the Manchester Playing Pitch Strategy, which the Committee was due to receive an update report on at its 8 November meeting. He reported that the MCR Active card had been successful in enabling the Council to gather data on the people using leisure facilities, including casual users. He advised Members that he could provide data on which wards the users of individual leisure facilities lived in. He informed Members that the data showed that some groups were under-represented, which included women and girls, disabled people and people over the age of 50, which reflected a national trend, but that Manchester was performing better than the national average on people from BAME (black and minority ethnic) groups accessing leisure facilities.

The Strategic Lead (Libraries, Galleries and Culture) informed Members that the Council had now started the conversation with MHCC on the contribution of Arts and Leisure to the Our Healthier Manchester Strategy and he offered to provide further information to the Committee at a future date. The Culture Lead (Libraries, Galleries and Culture) acknowledged that transport was a big issue and outlined some of the approaches being taken to address this such as basing activity in local places and cultural organisations negotiating with transport companies to put in place transport schemes to enable cheaper travel to their events. The Executive Member for Schools, Culture and Leisure advised that the Council needed to work with Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) to address this.

Decisions

1. To request a further report on Widening Access and Participation focusing specifically on protected characteristics.
2. To request that data on which wards the users of individual leisure facilities lived in be circulated to Members.
3. To note that further information on the conversations with MHCC on the contribution of Arts and Leisure to the Our Healthier Manchester Strategy will be provided in a future report.

CESC/18/40 Cultural Ambition

The Committee received a report of the Deputy Chief Executive which provided an overview of work undertaken to develop and deliver the Cultural Ambition.

Dave Moutrey, Director and Chief Executive of HOME and Director of Culture for Manchester City Council, referred to the main points and themes within the report, which included:

- The background to the Cultural Ambition strategy;
- The priorities within the strategy; and
- Working groups and joint strategic initiatives.

Some of the key points that arose from the Committee's discussions were:

- That Manchester had an excellent cultural offer but that local residents in some areas were not connected with this;
- That the focus needed to be not just on enabling access but also developing residents' interest in the cultural offer; and
- That this should include bringing cultural events to local venues.

The Executive Member for Schools, Culture and Leisure acknowledged that many people had limited experience of the cultural offer and reported that the Council and partner organisations were working to address this through the Cultural Ambition strategy and the work of the Manchester International Festival. He outlined some of the work taking place to bring culture closer to local people, including "Fun Palace" events taking place in local libraries, and advised that it was important to have a diverse offer to appeal to a wider audience.

Dave Moutrey informed Members that work was taking place to create a resident-facing website about what was available but that it was also important to get out in communities and build relationships with people. He informed Members about the work of the Cold-Spots Working Group which was identifying communities which the cultural organisations were not engaging with so that their limited resources could be better targeted at these communities.

Decision

To note the report.

CESC/18/41 Manchester International Festival

The Committee received a report of the Deputy Chief Executive which provided a picture of work carried out by Manchester International Festival (MIF) to widen participation since the last Festival in July 2017.

John McGrath from MIF referred to the main points and themes within the report, which included:

- Organisational development;

- Audience development;
- Creative engagement; and
- Skills and training.

Some of the key points that arose from the Committee's discussions were:

- How young people from Manchester, including those from schools specialising in the arts, could access high quality, well-paid jobs in the sector;
- To welcome the new initiatives and diverse activity; and
- To request further information on Festival in My House.

John McGrath informed Members that MIF had starting running jobs drives in their offices to help people to find out about the jobs available and was working to ensure that there were career pathways from entry level jobs to senior roles. He advised that most jobs in the sector were behind the scenes and, as there were other organisations in Manchester focusing on developing performers, MIF was focusing on these other roles. Jennifer Cleary from MIF reported that Festival in My House had first taken place at MIF 2017 and was about local people planning a micro-international festival for their neighbours in their home, with support from MIF.

Decision

To note the report.

CESC/18/42 Volunteering and Timebanking Update

The Committee received a report of the Chief Operating Officer (Neighbourhoods) on volunteering and timebanking which provided a brief update on progress and the ongoing work programme since the previous report presented to the Committee in December 2017. It also included an overview of the work that was underway on identifying and working with community-based assets (people, buildings, spaces).

The main points and themes within the report included:

- Progress on encouraging more volunteering activity within the city;
- Timebanking; and
- Community asset mapping.

Some of the key points that arose from the Committee's discussions were:

- To welcome the progress made; and
- To ask how timebanking could be introduced in other wards.

Claire Tomkinson from Macc advised that, where there was an interest in introducing timebanking to an area of the city, her organisation would bring together existing timebanks and organisations which had expressed an interest in timebanks to look at how they could be used to build the network across the city. She advised that timebanking attracted people who would not take part in traditional volunteering.

Decision

To note the report.

CESC/18/43 Improving Life Chances - Generations Together

The Committee received a report of the Deputy Chief Executive which highlighted the Council's commitment to Improving Life Chances for all Manchester communities, one of its strategic equality objectives.

The Lead Member for Intergenerational Issues referred to the main points and themes within the report, which included:

- An update on the Council's equality objectives;
- Work to improve life chances; and
- Intergenerational work.

Some of the key points that arose from the Committee's discussions were:

- How much involvement the Age Friendly Manchester (AFM) Older People's Board had had in this work and whether an event could be held to jointly re-launch the Older People's Charter and the manifesto for young people;
- Whether this work included any work to address social isolation; and
- To suggest that the next Equality Lead Members' meeting look at how this work could be linked up with work on other protected characteristics.

The Lead Member for Intergenerational Issues confirmed that she had been in contact with representatives from AFM and advised that she would take forward the suggestion regarding the Older People's Charter and the manifesto for young people. She informed Members of intergenerational work which was taking place in some areas to tackle social isolation, which, she advised, brought benefits for both the young people and the older people involved. She advised that there was a lot of great work taking place on a piecemeal basis across the city and it was important to have a strategy to scale this up. The Deputy Leader advised that young people could also be socially isolated. She informed Members about a forthcoming report from the organisation Greater Manchester Talent Match called "Still Hidden" which focused on isolated young people who were not engaged in training, employment or with public services. She offered to circulate the link to Committee Members.

Decision

To note report.

CESC/18/44 Overview Report

A report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit was submitted. The overview report contained a list of key decisions yet to be taken within the Committee's remit, responses to previous recommendations and the Committee's work programme, which the Committee was asked to approve.

The Chair commented that the report on the Strategic Plan for Events had been withdrawn from the agenda of today's meeting and would be considered at the next meeting on 8 November 2018.

Decision

To note the report and agree the work programme.