

Overview and Scrutiny District Centres Subgroup

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 31 October 2019

Present:

Councillor Shilton Godwin – in the Chair
Councillors Hughes, Kirkpatrick, Madeleine Monaghan and Stanton

Councillor Richards, Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration
Councillor Reid, Ward Councillor for Gorton and Abbey Hey
Councillor Hacking, Ward Councillor for Chorlton
Councillor Holt, Ward Councillor for Chorlton
Councillor White, Ward Councillor for Old Moat
Dr Chloe Steadman, Institute of Place Management
Dr Nikos Ntounis, Institute of Place Management
Marie Hodgson, Manchester Life

ESC/OSG/19/6 Minutes

With reference to item ESC/OSG/19/03, the Head of City Policy reported that, despite a strong bid being submitted to the Future High Streets Fund on behalf of Withington District Centre, unfortunately, on this occasion this had been unsuccessful. He stated that consideration would be given to future applications.

The Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration stated that a process would be agreed for which areas were to be submitted to any second round of applications to the Future High Streets Fund. She suggested that an update on this process be reported to a future meeting of the Subgroup.

Officers recommended that the reference in item ESC/OSG/19/04 to Area Based Collaborative Enterprise (ABCE) Cities be corrected to Area Based Collaborative Entrepreneurship (ABCE) Cities. The Chair agreed to this.

Decision

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2019, subject to the above amendment.

ESC/OSG/19/7 Identity, Branding and Marketing

The Subgroup considered the presentation from Marie Hodgson of Manchester Life on how Manchester Life has created a sense of place in Ancoats.

Marie Hodgson referred to the main points and themes within the presentation which included: -

- Providing a background to Manchester Life which had been established to respond to the need for housing and to deliver a thriving and safe neighbourhood;

- An update on the schemes that had been delivered in Ancoats and New Islington and the approach to establishing a sense of neighbourhood, home and belonging, both inside and outside of buildings;
- The rationale for locating commercial space within neighbourhoods and the encouragement of independent businesses, with due regard given to licensing considerations and fair commercial lease arrangements;
- The approach to the development of the public realm;
- The role of the public sector in the development and delivery of the schemes;
- The approach to minimising the buy to let market;
- The joint approach to neighbourhood and place management, including working with partners such as Greater Manchester Police (GMP) and Council officers;
- Describing the role of the 'Manchester Life Placemaker' employed by Manchester Life to build the residents' sense of community, ensure high levels of retention and promote community cohesion; and
- Noting that the area had become a destination area, with a recognised offer.

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

- Supporting the approach adopted in this area;
- How was the issue of subletting monitored;
- Did the service charge reflect the service that was provided;
- Had apartments been developed for families and were play areas available and any plans for schools in the area;
- This model should be applied to future plans for Wythenshawe;
- What was Manchester Life's response to the Climate Emergency;
- Noting the importance of a sense of vision and ambition when developing neighbourhoods and noting the importance of safety and stable communities; and
- Recognising the benefits that could be realised through Public/Private investment in neighbourhoods.

Marie Hodgson stated that there was a policy of no subletting as part of the lease agreement. She advised that in exceptional circumstances this could be allowed; however, they did everything they could to avoid buy to lets, such as not selling more than one property to one person. She also said that concierges in buildings were important as they could get to know occupiers and know who should or should not be in the building.

Marie Hodgson informed Members that the service charge was not excessive, stating that the model had been designed to be affordable for working people. She reported they did offer a range of properties including three bedroom apartments and town houses.

Marie Hodgson advised that the Public/Private Partnership model worked very well and had been important to successfully delivering the scheme. She said Manchester Life had invested in and remained committed to the area and were keen to work closely with the Council to support the community, noting that they had a very good working relationship with the Council. She further commented that they had

established good relationships with other developers in the area adding that the ethos, behaviours and expectations of Manchester Life would influence other developers.

Marie Hodgson further commented that they currently did not have a climate change policy but recognised the importance of this issue and consideration would be given to developing one. She further commented that measures such as adequate and safe cycle storage was provided to encourage active travel and full recycling facilities were provided for residents. She commented that open spaces were available in the area and opportunities to extend this offer for children and families would be explored.

Marie Hodgson concluded by encouraging Members of the Subgroup to visit the site.

The Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration stated that the lessons learnt from this scheme would be applied to any plans for Wythenshawe District Centre.

The Chair highlighted some of the key themes from this work, including having a strong sense of vision from the start and following that through, the Public/Private partnership, the focus on safety, having animated spaces and having stable communities.

Decision

To note the presentation, to suggest that this work would be a useful case study and to request that the presentation slides be circulated to Members of the Subgroup.

ESC/OSG/19/8 Place Management Pilots Reports - Chorlton and Gorton

The Subgroup considered the report of the Strategic Director (Growth and Development) that provided Members with an update on progress with the District Centre Pilot projects that were being progressed by the Institute of Place Management (IPM) at Manchester Metropolitan University, with the support of the Council. The Place Management Pilots were a key aspect of the work programme overseen by the District Centres Subgroup, and were considering new opportunities to engage local stakeholders and enhance the quality of Manchester neighbourhoods.

The report summarised the outcome of the Chorlton and Gorton Place Management Pilots, which had reached final report stage and recommended next steps to conclude the project. The report was accompanied by presentations submitted by the IPM.

Dr Nikos Ntounis and Dr Chloe Steadman from the IPM referred to the main points and themes within the presentations which included: -

- Describing the approach to the Place Management Pilots;
- Information on the Chorlton Place Management Pilot, including an overview of findings and recommendations;
- Information on the Gorton Place Management Pilot, including an overview of findings and recommendations; and

- Next Steps.

The Subgroup heard from Councillor Holt, Ward Councillor for Chorlton. She stated that she welcomed the report and asked what could be done next to realise the ambitions for Chorlton to ensure it was a great place for people living in and visiting the area and to ensure it remained viable long term. She stated that Chorlton benefited from a diversity of shops and services and that the gentrification of the area should be resisted for the benefit of all residents.

The Subgroup heard from Councillor Hacking, Ward Councillor for Chorlton, who stated that he welcomed the report. He stated that it was very comprehensive, and confirmed what local Members already knew about the area. He welcomed the reported increased number of visitors to Chorlton, commenting that this was very encouraging when compared to the challenges experienced in other areas. With regard to capacity he stated there were a number of complex developments in the area, and questioned whether the local Neighbourhood Team had the required resources available to manage and coordinate this. He stated that the brand of Chorlton did exist amongst the local population and across Manchester. With regard to the public realm he commented that the pavements were in a poor state of repair and investment in the public realm was required. He commented that Beech Road was a vibrant area that reflected the changing demands of the market. In response to a comment from a Member regarding the impact of the closure of the Leisure Centre on local traders, he stated that whilst regretting the closure of the centre, this had not been an issue, adding that there were a number of businesses on Manchester Road and the challenge now was how that site and that side of the road was to be developed.

The Chair commented that the footfall data, in particular for the Great Get Together event should be circulated to Members and local traders. She further commented that the evening offer was not centred around the core of the district centre but rather spread out across the wider area and this needed to be taken into consideration in the delineation of the district centre in the new Local Plan. She further acknowledged the comments regarding the importance of the public realm.

The Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration stated that she recognised the importance of stakeholder involvement in developing local plans, using an Our Manchester approach at a local, grassroots level. She stated that one of the benefits of this would be to foster a sense of place, similar to what had been described by Manchester Life. She acknowledged the Members' comments regarding the public realm and stated that this was not unique to Chorlton and the impact of austerity could not be underestimated.

Dr Ntounis stated that he welcomed the comments from the Subgroup and that these would be relayed to the core team at IPM.

The Subgroup heard from Councillor Reid, Ward Councillor for Gorton and Abbey Hey. She questioned why the footfall counter had been positioned on the south side of Hyde Road, stating that this was an inappropriate location and the views of Councillors should have been sought on this. She stated that the market would have been a better location to capture an accurate count of footfall, commenting about the

success and popularity of the market. She stated that options for extending the market offer into the evening should be explored.

Councillor Reid stated that the report did not fully reflect the views of people from Gorton and questioned the level of input from local residents. She further questioned the emphasis within the report given to Gorton Monastery, adding that this was not the centre of Gorton. She further commented that the report should have included information on the new Community Hub and a new youth centre that was due to be opened, both of which, she advised, would stimulate the local economy. She commented that the report did not recognise the amount of housing that was being developed in the local area. She also stated that more needed to be done to improve the night-time economy offer.

A Member of the Subgroup who was a Ward Councillor for Gorton and Abbey Hey commented that the report did not include comments and recommendations that he had made at consultation events, for example, comments on leisure facilities and the improvements required for the shops on Hyde Road. He also stated that the market should be utilised to stimulate other activities, such as craft and food markets that would act as an attraction and encourage people to visit in the evenings and on Sundays.

The Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration commented that the consultation workshops had been attended by the Gorton Events Group and that the report did focus on opportunities and priorities, including using the unique history of the area to help create a branding for the area. She agreed that more needed to be done to engage with local traders on Hyde Road. She stated that consideration would be given as to how markets generally could be used to act as a hub for activities, and this subject was scheduled to be discussed at the next meeting of the Subgroup.

Dr Chloe Steadman stated that she welcomed the comments from the Subgroup and that these would be relayed to the core team at IPM. She commented that whilst it was recognised that each district centre was unique there were opportunities to share learning and good practice across district centres. For example in Withington the local traders had organised a Withington at Night event that had witnessed a 30% increase in footfall in the evening.

Dr Steadman stated that the IPM had not been involved with the positioning of the footfall counter and she would take the comments of the Subgroup back to the partners who had installed it.

The Head of City Policy stated that the reports were currently in draft form, that he welcomed the contributions from the Subgroup and that these would be taken into account prior to the final reports being published. He stated that consideration needed to be given as to how local people could then take ownership of the reports and take these forward, using the intelligence that had been obtained.

Decision

To note the report and presentations.

ESC/OSG/19/9 Terms of Reference and Work Programme

The Chair questioned whether the report on the Wythenshawe Town Centre Development would be ready soon enough to be considered by the Subgroup at one of its remaining meetings. The Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration suggested that this instead be considered by the Economy Scrutiny Committee, to which the Chair agreed.

The Head of City Policy reported that, if the Council received any further information about a second round of the Town Centre Challenge Fund, this could be discussed at a future meeting.

Decision

To note the Terms of Reference and agree the Work Programme, subject to the above amendments.