

Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 3 September 2020

This Scrutiny meeting was conducted via Zoom, in accordance with the provisions of the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

Present:

Councillor Hacking - In the Chair

Councillors Andrews, Battle, Chambers, Collins, M Dar, Doswell, Grimshaw, Hitchen, Kirkpatrick and Rawson

Also present:

Councillor N Murphy, Deputy Leader

Councillor Rahman, Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure

Councillor Davies, Ward Councillor for Deansgate

Apologies:

Councillors Douglas and Rawlins

CESC/20/31 Minutes

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 23 July 2020 as a correct record.

CESC/20/32 Peterloo Memorial

The Director of City Centre Growth and Infrastructure informed the Committee that a number of permanent options had been considered to make the Peterloo Memorial fully accessible to all disabled people, including a lift, a bridge and different designs of ramp. She advised Members that these options had been assessed by the Design Team, working with the access campaign group, but none of the options had proved viable, due to the constraints of the site and the geometry of the Memorial. She reported that discussions were now taking place about exploring a temporary ramp solution.

The Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure acknowledged that mistakes had been made which had resulted in the Memorial not being fully accessible. He reported that the Council had spent 12 months working to try to find a permanent solution, in consultation with the access campaign group, but had not been able to find one. He advised the Committee that a temporary ramp was now being considered which could be in place around the date of the anniversary of the Peterloo Massacre every year. He informed the Committee that the next steps were to communicate further with the access campaign group and hold a public meeting to discuss the options that had been explored, why they were not feasible and the proposals for a temporary ramp. He advised Members that the Memorial had not been used for protests or as a speakers' corner, as had been envisaged, as events

like that tended to take place in Albert Square, St Peters Square or Piccadilly Gardens and that very few people were climbing onto the Memorial. He reported that lessons had been learnt, that considerations about accessibility had been central in the design process for the Memorial to the victims of the Manchester Arena terrorist attack from the start and that this was the approach that would be taken for any future monuments.

The Chair reiterated the Committee's commitment to the Memorial being accessible to all people. He stated that the Committee had previously requested that the options for making the Memorial accessible be reviewed, that planning processes being reviewed to ensure that accessibility issues were identified and addressed at an earlier stage and that a public meeting take place, with an independent chair, so that interested parties could explore the options that had been put forward. He reported that the public meeting had not yet taken place, noting the challenges presented by the ongoing pandemic, but that his view was that this meeting should now be arranged. He advised that consideration would need to be given to holding this meeting virtually.

The Ward Councillor for Deansgate highlighted that Ward Councillors had raised the issue of accessibility at an earlier stage in the process; however, she acknowledged that lessons had since been learnt. She advised Members that accessibility needed to be embedded in the planning process more widely, not just for monuments. She reported that the Memorial had been used for a protest on the anniversary of the Massacre. A Member commented that a number of protest groups within the city had decided not to use the Memorial for protests at present in solidarity with disabled people who were not able to use it.

The Ward Councillor for Deansgate suggested that the Committee request a report on what options had been considered, what the obstacles were, who had been consulted and any alternative views so that officers' conclusions could be interrogated.

The Chair proposed that officers proceed with the rest of the agreed process, including the public meeting, and that the Committee then receive a report at a future meeting, where Members could review what had taken place and hear the views of those involved, including the accessibility campaigners. He expressed thanks to the groups involved for their co-operation in working with the Council to try to find a solution.

The Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure offered to circulate a note to Members outlining the work that had taken place to look for a solution, to which the Chair agreed. He acknowledged the Ward Councillor's comment about a protest having taken place on the Memorial on the anniversary of the Massacre and highlighted the proposal to put a temporary ramp in place around this date.

In response to a question from a Member on timescales for the rest of the process, the Chair advised that he would speak to the Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure and other stakeholders about when the public meeting could take place and stated that his view was that it should take place as soon as was feasible. He advised that he would feed back to the disability access campaigners what had been

discussed at this meeting. He also requested a short report to the Committee's October or November meeting outlining progress made since today's meeting.

Decisions

1. To ask the Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure to circulate a note to Members which outlines the work that has taken place to find a solution to the accessibility issues relating to the Memorial.
2. To request a short report to the Committee's October or November meeting on the progress made since this meeting.

CESC/20/33 Proposed Public Spaces Protection Order Wynnstay Grove

The Committee received a report of the Head of Compliance, Enforcement and Community Safety which provided an update on the outcome of the consultation for the proposed Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) for Wynnstay Grove.

The Deputy Leader and officers referred to the main points and themes within the report, which included:

- Background;
- Evidence of issues of concern;
- Impact of the behaviour;
- Action taken to address the issues reported;
- The consultation and the responses;
- Consideration of the articles for a PSPO;
- Human rights and equality considerations;
- The proposed PSPO;
- Enforcement; and
- Next steps.

In response to a Member's question on timescales, the Deputy Leader stated that he would want the PSPO to be implemented as soon as possible. He highlighted that action was already being taken by Council officers and Greater Manchester Police (GMP) to address anti-social behaviour around the clinic but that the PSPO would be an additional piece of legislation which would assist with this. The Community Safety Lead advised that, following the six-week period in which an appeal could be made, there would be a period of educating those affected by the PSPO on the prohibitions, requirements and consequences of a breach before it was enforced. The Deputy Leader informed the Committee that officers would still be working to address the prohibited activities during this period and move people on but that the penalties laid out in the PSPO would not be used during this education period.

Members commented that it appeared that a robust process had taken place. The Chair welcomed that an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) had been carried out. Another Member welcomed the proposed PSPO, advising that a similar PSPO in Ealing, London had been successful in addressing the issues there.

In response to a Member's question, the Community Safety Lead confirmed that the area covered by the proposed PSPO included the bus stops on Wilmslow Road which some of the people attending the clinic would be using.

Decision

To note the report.

CESC/20/34 Update on COVID-19

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) which provided a further update summary of the current situation in the city in relation to COVID-19 and an update on the work progressing in Manchester in relation to areas within the remit of this Committee.

Officers referred to the main points and themes within the report, which included:

- the impact and challenges relating to residents at risk, community resilience and equality and inclusion; and
- Key planning and recovery activity being undertaken in relation to these areas.

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

- The uptake of local welfare assistance for unpaid carers;
- Support for victims of domestic abuse, including refuge accommodation and safe rooms; and
- Work to address Digital Exclusion.

The Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) advised Members that she would speak to the Director of Customer Services & Transaction regarding the strategy for increasing the uptake of local welfare assistance for unpaid carers. She reported that a lot of work was taking place to address digital exclusion, through work being led by the Director of Inclusive Growth and also through the Library Service. She offered to provide Members with additional information on this after the meeting. The Chair advised that the Committee had a report on Digital Inclusion on the work programme, due to be scheduled for a future meeting.

The Chair reported that the Committee also had an item on Domestic Abuse on its work programme and suggested that this could be discussed further under the Overview Report item on the agenda. The Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) advised Members that she would ensure that this report included information on safe rooms. She reported that the availability of refuge accommodation was being monitored on a daily basis and would be considered as part of the refresh of the Domestic Violence Strategy. In response to a question from the Chair, she advised that a full report on Domestic Abuse could be provided to the Committee's November meeting but that she would ask the Domestic Abuse Reduction Manager to provide some information in response to Members' questions in the interim.

In response to a Member's question on food support, the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) reported that work was taking place to help people who had been

reliant on food parcels during the COVID-19 pandemic to access food in a different way and she asked the Member to contact her and the Director of Inclusive Growth if she had any particular concerns relating to her ward. Another Member praised the work of staff who had worked in the food hub at New Smithfield Depot and at local food banks to ensure that residents had access to food during this time. The Chair asked the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) to pass on the Committee's thanks to staff and partners for their work during this challenging time.

Decision

To note the report.

CESC/20/35 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 recommended that the Committee receive the reports on Domestic Abuse and Digital Inclusion at its November meeting.

A Member reported that the Independent Race Review had been considered at the Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee (RAGSC) meeting on 1 September 2020 but that some elements of the Review fell within the remit of this Committee. He questioned whether this should be included as part of the Equalities item on the agenda for next month's meeting or whether it should be a separate item. The Chair stated that he would discuss with the Chair of RAGSC which aspects of the Review each Committee was looking at. The City Solicitor advised Members that, while this Committee should not duplicate the work of the RAGSC, there were some elements of the Review which were not workforce-related. She suggested that the presentation slides from the RAGSC's meeting be circulated to Members of this Committee and that Members might find it useful to watch the webcast of the RAGSC's meeting on 1 September 2020 to hear the contributions of the presenting officers. The Chair advised the Committee that he would speak to the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods regarding whether to consider the Independent Race Review as part of the Equalities item or as a separate report.

Decision

To note the report and agree the work programme, subject to the above amendments.