



Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee

Date: Wednesday, 10 March 2021
Time: 2.00 pm
Venue: Virtual Meeting - Webcast at -
<https://vimeo.com/514244047>

There will be a private meeting for Members only at 11am Monday 8 March 2021 via Zoom. A separate invite will be sent to members with joining details.

Advice to the Public

The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020

Under the provisions of these regulations the location where a meeting is held can include reference to more than one place including electronic, digital or virtual locations such as internet locations, web addresses or conference call telephone numbers.

To attend this meeting it can be watched live as a webcast. The recording of the webcast will also be available for viewing after the meeting has concluded.

Membership of the Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee

Councillors - Igbon (Chair), Azra Ali, Appleby, Butt, Flanagan, Hassan, Hughes, Jeavons, Kilpatrick, Lynch, Lyons, Razaq, Sadler, Strong, Whiston, White and Wright

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 - 12

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2021.

5. The lifting of eviction restrictions in the Private Rented Sector and the impact of these changes on the homelessness directorate

13 - 26

Report of the Interim Director of Homelessness

This report describes that the eviction moratorium has been extended to the 31st March 2021, subject to review, and therefore evictions will not commence until the 14th April at the earliest. This report indicates that demand will increase within the 2021/22 financial year and lists the factors that will impact upon the level of demand and the timing of it.

6. Housing Allocations Policy Review

27 - 38

Report of the Strategic Director, Growth & Development

This report describes the work undertaken to deliver the new social housing allocations scheme on time despite Covid-19 pressures. While noting that the new scheme has not yet been in operation long enough for impact to be assessed, the current housing register position is consistent with the new scheme working as intended.

7. Overview Report

39 - 44

Report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit

This is a monthly report, which includes the recommendations monitor, relevant key decisions, the Committee's work programme and any items for information.

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 Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee has responsibility for looking at how the Council and its partners create neighbourhoods that meet the aspirations of Manchester's citizens.

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. Speaking at a meeting will require a video link to the virtual meeting.

Members of the public are requested to bear in mind the current guidance regarding Coronavirus (COVID19) and to consider submitting comments via email to the Committee Officer. The contact details of the Committee Officer for this meeting are listed below.

The Council is concerned to ensure that its meetings are as open as possible and confidential business is kept to a strict minimum. When confidential items are involved these are considered at the end of the meeting and the means of external access to the virtual meeting are suspended.

Joanne Roney OBE
Chief Executive
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Further Information

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

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This agenda was issued on **Tuesday, 2 March 2021** by the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit, Manchester City Council, Level 3, Town Hall Extension, Manchester M60 2LA

Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2021

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 Igbon – in the Chair
Councillors Appleby, Butt, Flanagan, Hassan, Hughes, Jeavons, Kilpatrick, Lynch, Lyons, Sadler, White and Wright

Apologies: Councillors Azra Ali and Razaq

Also present:

Councillor Akbar, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods
Councillor Rahman, Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure
Councillor Stogia, Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport
Councillor Shiekh, Assistant Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport

NESC/21/08 Minutes

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2021 as a correct record.

NESC/21/09 Neighbourhoods Directorate Budget Proposals 2021/22

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) that provided an updated Neighbourhoods Service 2021/21 budget and set out the proposed savings proposals, this reflected any feedback from both the November 2020 and January 2021 Scrutiny committee.

The Committee was invited to comment on the report prior to it being considered by Executive.

The main points and themes within the report included: -

- Describing the 2021/22 budget pressures;
- Outlining the 2021/22 savings proposals as part of the wider £50m savings required by the Council;
- Describing that the Neighbourhoods Directorate had identified an initial £6.683m saving in 2021/22 increasing to £7.376m by 2024/25 across the Neighbourhoods Directorate; and

- To minimise the impact on residents and neighbourhoods, all opportunities for maximising external income sources were considered and the overall Directorate proposals includes £5.985m of increased income generation.

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

- Noting that the government had failed to keep to the promise made at the start of the pandemic that local authorities would be reimbursed for the additional costs incurred;
- Noting that the additional budgetary pressures experienced was in addition to a number of years of budget cuts and austerity; and
- Welcoming the reported levels of recycling, noting the city had achieved our highest overall levels of recycling (40%) and lowest levels of residual waste over the last 10 years, noting this achieved savings to the Council via the waste levy.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods welcomed the improvements achieved across the city in relation to recycling rates. He stated that the ambition is to target work to help further increase these rates, however noted the challenges to achieve these ambitions without adequate funding by the government.

The Chair in concluding this item of business expressed her gratitude to all officers and the Executive Members for their work to deliver and protect services on behalf of the residents of the city in extremely challenging circumstances.

Decision

The Committee endorse the proposals presented within the report to the Executive and Council.

NESC/21/10 Homelessness Directorate Budget and Savings Options 2021/22

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Homelessness that provided the high-level budget context and priorities for Homelessness across 2021/22 and was an update to the report presented to Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny 13 January 2021, which had been used for the development of savings proposals 2021/22 and investment requirements to fund population driven and other budget pressures.

The Committee was invited to comment on the report prior to it being considered by Executive.

The main points and themes within the report included: -

- The report set out a one year budget for 2021/22, however the longer term implications had been considered and those were considered in the Council's medium term financial planning;
- The report had been updated to reflect the Comprehensive Spending Review and Financial Settlement for the City Council which had resulted in a reduction in the Homelessness savings target of £0.5m;

- Describing the Budget Strategy for the Homelessness Service;
- Describing the uncertainty of short-term funding, noting that 2020/21 Homelessness budget is supported by significant non-recurrent one-off funding;
- Providing an overview of the Service Transformation Programme and the savings proposals;
- The approach to savings would be based on the proposed Service Transformation Programme which gave a strategic direction and framework to services, based on a focus of outcomes and partnerships; and
- An update on the Covid-19 response and Everyone In, externally commissioned homelessness services and homelessness management.

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

- Noting and welcoming the commitment to continue funding the Everyone In programme beyond March 2021; and
- What support was being offered to those citizens accessing the Everyone In programme to support them into suitable accommodation'

The Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure stated that despite the promises made to Manchester and all other local authorities that financial assistance would be made available to support councils to accommodate homeless people during the pandemic this had not been provided. He described this as a failure of government, however despite this Manchester had responded to the situation and sought to support the most vulnerable residents in the city in a dignified and appropriate manner and he reiterated his call upon the government to fund Manchester appropriately and fairly.

The Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure described the challenge to plan and deliver innovative schemes and programmes to tackle homelessness due to the short term approach and piecemeal funding arrangements provided to local authorities, stating that long term appropriate levels of funding was required.

The Director of Homelessness stated that the Everyone In programme had allowed for the delivery of wrap around support services to be provided to homeless people with the intention to support people into appropriate housing solutions, including commissioned supported accommodation. In reply to a specific question regarding staffing he informed the Committee that the FTE reduction saving identified would be achieved through either voluntary severance or retirement.

The Chair stated that the work of the homelessness team and all of the voluntary organisations working across the city was important and valued in addressing homelessness and supporting vulnerable citizens in Manchester.

Decision

The Committee endorse the savings proposals identified to the Executive.

NESC/21/11 Manchester City Council Climate Change Action Plan 2020-25

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer that provided an update on the significant progress that has been made in delivering the Climate Change Action Plan over the last 10 months despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. A detailed update on all the actions contained within the Plan with data and visual images where available was appended to the report.

The main points and themes within the report included: -

- Providing an introduction and background to the Plan, noting that Council declared a Climate Emergency in July 2019 which recognised the need for the Council, and the city as a whole, to do more to reduce CO2 emissions and mitigate the negative impacts of climate change;
- Providing an overview of the Action Plan that was structured in five sections / workstreams;
- An overview of the established governance arrangements;
- An overview and update on the progress to date;
- Emerging priorities for 2021/22;
- Funding arrangements; and
- Listing those action that required accelerating due to the impact of COVID-19.

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

- Welcoming the report and commenting that the quality and presentation of the data and information presented was comprehensive, concise and accessible;
- How many staff and Councillors had completed the Carbon Literacy training to date;
- How many wards had received specific climate change related events;
- Was there a zero carbon advertising strategy;
- What work was being undertaken with local schools regarding meals to promote meat free days and the sourcing of local produce;
- How much of the carbon reduction reported against Council buildings was as a result of the decarbonisation of the national grid;
- Were there any more possible savings from the replacement street lighting;
- Noting the data reported for street lighting and the operational fleet, why was there a difference between quarter 1 and 2 compared to the previous year;
- Noting the impact of Covid on levels of homeworking was consideration being given to how staff would be working in the future and how buildings would be used post pandemic;
- What work was being done to engage businesses on the issue of climate change;
- Would climate change be addressed in the Local Plan;
- What work was undertaken to ensure all building developments across this city were sustainable and supported the carbon reduction ambitions of the city;
- When would the additional waste fleet vehicles be in service;
- A Member requested that information on the Newton Heath Project be shared with the three Miles Platting and Newton Heath councillors following the meeting;

- Requesting an update on the call on the Greater Manchester Pension Fund (GMPF) to divest from fossil fuels;
- Would local ward councillors be involved with the planned cycle and walking routes for Wythenshawe;
- Noting that it was reported that the Civic Quarter Heat Network would initially run on gas, some of which was green gas, would consideration be given to using alternative sources of energy in the future;
- Were there any additional or alternative sources of funding to support the retrofitting of homes to enable the necessary level of retrofitting by 2038;
- Information was sought on the recruitment and role of the Climate Change Neighbourhood Officers that were being recruited;
- Welcoming the information on the Tree Action Plan;
- Clarification was sought as to the reasons for the air travel reported; and
- Following the UK's exit from the European Union could Manchester continue to bid for European funding to support environmental projects.

The Chair invited Cllr Wright to update the Committee on the changes proposed to scrutiny arrangements that had been discussed and proposed at the recent meeting of the Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee. Cllr Wright stated that it had been recommended that the remits of all six scrutiny committees would be reviewed with the intention of having one committee that was dedicated to climate change and the environment. This proposal was to be progressed and finalised in March. The Committee noted and welcomed this update.

In response to the questions, the Director of Policy, Performance and Reform informed the Members that to date a total of 961 staff (including 45 Councillors) had completed the Carbon Literacy training. He stated that it was anticipated that the silver accreditation status would be achieved as there were an additional 150 members of staff scheduled to undertake the training. He noted that the delivery of this training had converted to being delivered online during the pandemic.

In response to the number of events delivered in wards, the Head of Neighbourhood Management stated that to date, noting the restrictions due to the pandemic, events had been held across fourteen different wards, that had been attended by over 300 people and the intention was to continue with the work post Covid. She further stated that, in addition to those specific events, events had been held in three other wards that had included environmental and climate change elements. The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods commented that to date 41 separate environmental community projects had been supported through the dedicated Neighbourhood Investment Fund.

The Head of Neighbourhood Management reported that two of the three Climate Change Neighbourhood Officers had been recruited and that these staff had the necessary skills and experience to work with diverse local communities and existing networks and to support the local Neighbourhood Teams.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer stated that work was being developed with schools and partners around a range of environmental issues, including those raised by the Member. She further stated that consideration was being given to reviewing the staff workforce strategy and the travel policy in

recognition of the changes to working patterns as a result of Covid. She stated that it was important to recognise that a 'one size fits all' approach was not appropriate and that it was important to maintain a visible presence within the city and across neighbourhoods.

The Head of Corporate Estates and Facilities added that the 9% carbon reduction from Council building emissions was due to the decarbonisation of the national grid, however the new ways of working would allow for a review of the use of the estate with a view to making further savings, commenting that some buildings that had closed during Covid, such as libraries would reopen at an appropriate time. With reference to the Civic Quarter Heat Network he stated that consideration would be given to exploring the opportunities to reduce the carbon footprint of the energy centre once a stable operational point had been achieved.

The Head of Corporate Estates and Facilities stated that the emissions from streetlights had reduced due to the programme of upgrades to more energy efficient LED fittings. The fleet emissions had reduced due to both upgrading to electric vehicles and a reduction in journeys during the pandemic.

The Strategic Lead City Centre Partnerships informed the Committee that a review of the 27 new electric refuse collection vehicles would be undertaken to inform the roll out of additional vehicles to the fleet, taking into consideration all options. In response to the specific question regarding air travel she confirmed that the flights reported were booked by Children's Services and were to assist with the repatriation of people and were not for staff travel.

The Head of Integrated Commissioning and Procurement stated that the contract for external advertising had recently been awarded and although there was no specific clause relating to the advertising subject matter and climate change, the contract stipulated that the service vehicles would be electric and the actual sites were designed to collect rain water to clean the screens.

The Director of Licensing and Building Control described that the review of the Local Plan was an opportunity to embed and strengthen the climate ambitions for the city, however Members were reminded that the Core Strategy, adopted in 2012 already contained a robust framework to address climate change. She further described that this existing framework, as part of the planning process, was evidenced in the planning reports and these standards were applied to all developments.

The Strategic Lead Policy and Partnerships advised the Committee that the Climate Change Agency reported on city wide carbon budgets and this data was produced annually, however the Council did monitor and report its own progress against this target. In regard to the issue of retrofitting, he stated that the Council had continued to bid for all funding that had been made available, however he acknowledged that significant investment was required from the government to deliver the ambitions as described in the plan. He stated that direct lobbying of Government was being undertaken by senior officers on this specific issue as part of the wider Economic Recovery and Investment Plan, noting that this would also contribute to the local skills and employment ambitions.

In answer to a question regarding the skills for a zero carbon economy work, the Strategic Lead Policy and Partnerships stated that the Work and Skills team had been working on the emergency food response and on Covid business grants so had not been able to make as much progress as they would have liked. However, he informed the Committee that Green skills would be a key element of the Work and Skills Strategy that would be refreshed later this year. He further advised of an Our Town Hall green skills event for Manchester secondary schools scheduled for April.

In response to the specific question regarding access to European funding streams following the UK's exit from the European Union, the Strategic Lead Resources and Programme confirmed that the Zero Carbon Cities project that ran from 2019 to 2022 would not be affected as the funding had already been awarded. He stated that the deal allowed for continued access to funding streams, such as the new Horizon Europe programme.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer stated that the Council sought to influence and lead on the issue of climate change with business partners through a range of mechanisms, such as the Manchester Climate Change Partnership, the Business Sounding Board and City Co. She said this activity was also supported and complimented by the Manchester Climate Change Agency.

The Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport informed the Committee that the Wythenshawe Walking and Cycling scheme was currently in development and invitations had been sent to all appropriate Members inviting them to join her to cycle the route as an opportunity to obtain Members' feedback.

The Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport stated that she shared the disappointment and frustration of Members regarding the failure of the GMPF to respond to the calls to divest from fossil fuels and support the carbon reduction ambitions of the Council. She stated that in collaboration with her equivalent colleagues across Greater Manchester she would continue to lobby on this issue, adding that the GMPF had been invited to attend a Greater Manchester Green City Board meeting that had been scheduled. She commented that pension funds in other areas of the country had given an undertaking to divest from fossil fuels and urged GMPF to follow this example.

The Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport concluded by stating that she had welcomed the comments and questions from the Committee. She stated that she was keen to work closely with the format of the new scrutiny committee. She described that despite the enormous challenges experienced as a result of the pandemic the work to deliver the Climate Change Action Plan had continued as a priority. She paid tribute to all of the officers involved, stating that the same officers had been involved in additional activities to support residents.

The Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport stated that awareness of the importance of the environment had been highlighted during the pandemic and it was important to build upon and embed this across all activities as the city began the process of recovery post pandemic, including skills, employment and health. She concluded by stating that despite comments regarding climate change from the government this had not been followed by decisive actions and the

government needed to adequately fund Manchester to support delivery of our ambitious plan.

The Chair in conclusion expressed her gratitude on behalf of the Committee to the Executive Member and all officers for their continued commitment to delivering the Climate Change Action Plan during a very challenging period. She stated that the issue of climate change and carbon emissions was the responsibility of all residents across the city.

Decision

To note the report.

[Councillor Flanagan declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest as a family member was employed at Manchester airport.]

NESC/21/12 Overview Report

The report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit which contained key decisions within the Committee's remit and responses to previous recommendations was submitted for comment. Members were also invited to agree the Committee's future work programme.

Decision

To note the report and agree the work programme.

Manchester City Council Report for Information

Report to: Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee –
10 March 2021

Subject: The lifting of eviction restrictions in the Private Rented Sector
and the impact of these changes on the homelessness
directorate

Report of: The Interim Director of Homelessness

Summary

At the moment, it is too early to fully understand the demand that will impact on the homelessness directorate due to the lifting of the eviction moratorium. The eviction moratorium has been extended to the 31st March 2021, subject to review, and therefore evictions will not commence until the 14th April at the earliest. This report indicates that demand will increase within the 2021/22 financial year and lists the factors that will impact upon the level of demand and the timing of it.

Recommendations

Members are invited to consider and comment on the information contained within this report.

Wards Affected: All

Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city

Having high quality homes reduces the need to waste valuable resources on heating properties. This will help reduce the amount of carbon used. Helping people remain in their homes, rather than having to move to temporary accommodation outside of the city will ensure transport costs to existing support networks are not needed.

Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	Having good quality accommodation will help people to thrive. Reducing the number of people who are homeless, or placing them in appropriate accommodation with help to access employment and learning opportunities will contribute to Manchester becoming a thriving and sustainable city.

A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	Having accommodation that people can access, in areas where they have a support network to help them, and their children, into education or employment will help grow talent in the city.
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	Having good quality accommodation in our communities improves the environment people live in and helps them to make a positive contribution.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	Ensuring properties are a good quality and high standard will reduce the need to heat properties and therefore reduce energy waste.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

Not applicable.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Due to the impact of the covid-19 pandemic, the Government declared a moratorium on the eviction of people from both social and private rented sector accommodation to help stop the spread of covid-19, and to help people who were struggling to pay their rent due to socially isolating throughout lockdown. This moratorium has continued throughout the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns as more people have lost employment and struggled with rent payments.
- 1.2 This moratorium will have an impact upon the homelessness directorate when it is lifted and Courts are fully functioning. This report tries to anticipate levels of future demand by analysing factors such as the number of people losing employment, the numbers of people who are not paying their rent in the social sector and those accessing advice services. The report also looks at the numbers who have approached the housing solutions service because they have been given a notice, even though they do not currently have to leave their accommodation.

2. Background - Moratorium Legislation

- 2.1 The Coronavirus 2020 Act received Royal Assent on the 25 March 2020 and was introduced to help the country cope with the demands caused by the coronavirus outbreak. Sections of the Act provide protection to social and private tenants by delaying when landlords can start proceedings to evict tenants. The provisions of the Coronavirus Act 2020, which increased the required notice period length, have been extended through legislation throughout the pandemic.
- 2.2 The Government has extended the period of notice that a landlord must give to a tenant. If tenants were served a notice between 26 March 2020 and 28 August 2020 inclusive, the minimum notice period is three months.
- 2.3 From 29 August 2020, until the 31 March 2021 inclusive, with the exception of the most serious cases, landlords are not able to start possession proceedings unless they have given their tenants 6 months' notice. These serious cases include those in relation to anti-social behaviour (including rioting), domestic abuse, false statement and where a tenant has accrued rent arrears to the value of over 6 months' rent.
- 2.4 After a number of months of closure, the courts re-opened on 21 September 2020. This means that housing-related cases for eviction (known as possession cases) have resumed their progression through the court system, although many courts are running at a minimal capacity or are closed due to covid-19. Initially, only the most serious cases will be prioritised, such as cases involving domestic violence, serious anti-social behaviour and rent arrears of six months or more. Longer notice periods and new court rules apply during the national lockdown which is currently in force in England.

- 2.5 Renters will continue to be protected from eviction during the new national lockdown period. During this time, landlords can serve eviction notices and courts can grant eviction orders, but the government is extending existing legislation to ensure bailiffs do not serve eviction notices, except in the most serious circumstances. The only exceptions to this are illegal occupation, false statement, anti-social behaviour, perpetrators of domestic abuse in the social sector, where a property is unoccupied following death of a tenant and serious rent arrears greater than 6 months' rent. This legislation is in place until the 31 March and will be kept under review. Once the pause on evictions comes to an end, bailiffs need to provide at least two weeks' notice of an eviction, which means evictions in non-serious cases will resume from 14 April 2021, unless the Government makes an alternative announcement in the future.
- 2.6 The Government's measures only apply to renters who have an Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST) and some who have licences. They exclude lodgers, holiday-lets, hostel accommodation and accommodation for asylum seekers.
- 2.7 All this has meant that whilst landlords have continued to issue Section 21 notices since March 2020, landlords have not been able to enforce warrants since March 2020, and will not be able to enforce until 14 April 2021 at the earliest.
- 2.8 Alongside the eviction moratorium, there have been other moratoriums to support people throughout the pandemic, these include support around mortgage repayments, DWP sanctions, support with regards to utility debts, as well as the increase in Local Housing Allowance rates and the additional £20 per week that has been given through Universal Credit. Whilst this has significantly helped people throughout the pandemic, support and advice will be required for people if and when the financial support and moratoriums come to an end.

3. Covid-19 – Homeless Impact

- 3.1 A November 2020 report by Crisis showed that during the first few months of the pandemic, an increase in homelessness was driven by those already experiencing homelessness - people who were sofa surfing and living in dangerous and transient accommodation – who became more visible as their living situations forced them to access help. As the pandemic has progressed there have been bigger increases from people experiencing homelessness, people who have been furloughed and those who are newly unemployed.
- 3.2 This picture is reflected in Manchester where we have seen an increase in the number of benefit claimants in the private rented sector since the outbreak of Covid. The most common reason for homelessness acceptances in Manchester is the loss of a private rented tenancy. This is largely because of the differences between average rents and Local Housing Area (LHA) rent levels which form the basis of the level of benefit that will be paid for housing costs. Analysis undertaken by the Council's Policy, Research and Information (PRI) team highlights that whilst a rise in LHA rates from April 2020 has meant that more areas of the cities are now affordable, covid-19 has resulted in an

increase in individuals in Private Rented Sector (PRS) tenancies claiming benefits from the city centre and south of the city, areas where the LHA does not meet housing cost. It is not yet clear whether the increase in benefit claimants due to covid-19 will translate into a longer-term increase in claimants and what the impact on the level of evictions will be. However, there is a real concern that there will be an increase in evictions from long term claimants and those newly impacted by covid-19 who are struggling to maintain their PRS rental payments.

- 3.3 In anticipation of court capacity returning to normal and the moratorium on evictions being lifted, the council has been working closely with advice partners to encourage people to get advice as early as possible if they are struggling with paying their rent rather than ignoring concerns until it is too late to provide support through prevention work. An information initiative has started, with press releases and interviews given encouraging people to 'get help early'. (Appendix 1) This will continue. Despite this work it is still anticipated that there will be a significant number of eviction cases over the next financial year.

4. Demand and Capacity - Advice Services

- 4.1 Covid-19 has created increased demand for advice services, coupled with insufficient resource to meet current demand despite the excellent work advice organisations have been carrying out. From the 16 March 2020 Citizens Advice Manchester (CAM) witnessed a steep increase in demand, particularly employment advice enquiries primarily in relation to sick pay, redundancy and the government furlough scheme. In the period of July-September CAM saw over 14,500 benefit enquiries, which is c.30% higher than the same period in 2019. In addition, their Help to Claim service, which helps people in the early stages of Universal Credit (UC) from the application through to first payment, saw a significant spike in demand as many people impacted by covid-19 made a claim for Universal Credit. Other advice services report similar increases in demand with Cheetham Hill Advice Centre also reporting a far greater concentration of cases. Services are now supporting people who have never had contact with the benefits and tax credit systems before, as well as individuals who had been managing on tight budgets but who have seen their household expenditure tighten further.
- 4.2 Social distancing and other covid-19 related requirements have led to a shift to digital and telephone support and a reduction in the face to face support required. For example, CAM and MIND are not currently able to operate from bases such as the Rates Hall in the Town Hall Extension. In addition to digital exclusion, a scarcity of access to face-to-face support means that some people are unable to access simple support to scan documents for universal credit benefits claims etc. Officers are working hard with advice and digital exclusion services to address these issues, and Council services have put in place alternative measures for example, housing benefit will accept paper documents via post if people cannot send e-copies.

- 4.3 Whilst demand for support has increased, it has also been somewhat mitigated in some areas by the measures that the government has put in place, such as the furlough scheme and a moratorium on evictions. This is evident in the number of enquiries that CAM received around housing during July-September of this year, which dropped by c.10% in comparison with the previous year. However, potential redundancies and large-scale unemployment following the end of the furlough scheme are likely to increase demand for benefits, debt and employment advice. There is also an anticipated upsurge in requests for support around unmanageable debt with debt enquiries likely to rise as people face longer periods of pressure on their incomes. The concern is that this will lead to growing rent arrears and subsequent evictions and mortgage repossessions, as government protections are lifted, and repossession action is no longer postponed.
- 4.4 At the same time advice services will face new demand from existing clients returning (dormant / latent demand) with multiple and more complex issues that have been held in check by the government measures. The ongoing economic impacts of covid-19 could have a long-term impact on the numbers of people in the city who will experience financial hardship.

5. Current numbers in Temporary Accommodation

- 5.1 To put the potential future demand into context, the current numbers of households in temporary accommodation is in the table below.

	Families	Singles
B&B	41	250
In House TA	24	245
Dispersed	1,704	249
Total	1,769	744

- 5.2 The top three reasons for loss of settled home (from 1 April 2020 to 31 January 2021) are:

Family no longer willing or able to accommodate	1,223
End of private rented tenancy – assured shorthold tenancy	582
Domestic abuse	573

- 5.3 As can be seen, the numbers of people who are presenting to the homelessness directorate, giving the reason as end of private rented tenancy, throughout the pandemic remains high. Under legislation the Council is taking these applications, informing the household presenting that they can remain in the accommodation, whilst officers work with households to help them find alternative properties.

6. Potential Levels of Demand on Homeless Services - Data

- 6.1 As the moratorium on evictions has not yet been lifted, it is very difficult to predict the impact that it will have on demand for homeless services. Officers

have analysed the data available to see what can be used to predict future demand and what conclusions can be drawn from it. The following information only provides some potential scenarios as it is not possible to predict with any degree of accuracy the impact of Homelessness Services as there remains too many unknowns.

7. Figures from the Private Rented Sector (PRS) as an indication of demand

- 7.1 Between 2019 and 2020 the number of households in Manchester claiming either the housing element of Universal Credit (UC) or Housing Benefit increased 60% overall for those in PRS tenancies. The following table breaks this down.

UC Housing Element		Tenants receiving HB		Total			
PRS 2019	PRS 2020	PRS 2019	PRS 2020	PRS 2019	PRS 2020	Change	%
7,490	18,380	8,490	7,221	15,980	25,601	9,621	60%

Figures are as at August of each year

- 7.2 To try to give an indication of the impact this 60% increase could have on the number of households the Council would owe a homelessness duty to, and possibly accommodate, officers have looked at the 2019/20 figures for the loss of a PRS tenancy and applied this increase as a worst-case scenario. 2019/20 figures are used as this was the last year before the Covid-19 pandemic hit.

2019/20 cases where duty owed - end of PRS	x 60%	2019/20 cases with % added
1,176	708	1,884

- 7.3 In short, if there is an increase in residents who will fall into arrears or at risk of eviction as landlords do not want to rent to UC claimants there could be a further c700 households owed a duty on top of the existing 2020/21 figure of 1,176. This is based on the broad assumption that the 60% increase would feed through to the numbers presenting as Homeless and ultimately being owed a duty.

- 7.4 It is clear that the moratorium on evictions during 2020/21 has reduced demand. The table below shows a comparison of the number who were owed a homelessness duty in the first three quarters of 2020/21 compared to the same period in 2019/20

	2019/20 (to Q3)	2020/21 (to Q3)	Difference
Cases where duty owed end of PRS	903	558	-345

- 7.5 The above shows a reduction in demand of 38% which is an indication of the level of suppressed demand. This could mean a potential c 449 households that have not yet approached the council due to the moratorium. It is important

to note that some of these households could be double counted with those who are now claiming UC, but this is one of the many unknowns.

- 7.6 All these figures are about households who may be owed a homelessness duty, but it is unlikely that all of these will require temporary accommodation. Based on figures from 2019/20 and 2020/21, an average of 22% of those cases owed a duty went on to access temporary accommodation. If this trend continues and the proportion remains the same, then the increase in the number of universal credit claimants could ultimately lead to around 400 further temporary accommodation placements. If the suppressed demand is in addition to this, the number would increase to around 500, for reference the numbers of new placements accommodated in 2019/20 were 270.

	Number of cases where duty owed	Number needing TA
2019/20 figure + increase in UC claimants	1,884	414
2019/20 figure + increase in UC claimants + 2020/21 evictions delayed due to moratorium	2,333	513

- 7.7 The above is based on assumptions drawn from previous trends and the reality could be very different. An increase in 500 in temporary accommodation from the PRS would represent a 20% of those currently accommodated.

8. Figures from the Social Rented Sector (SRS) as an indication of demand

- 8.1 Between 2019 and 2020 the number of households claiming either the housing element of Universal Credit (UC) or Housing Benefit increased 17% overall for those in SRS tenancies. The following table breaks this down.

UC Housing Element		Tenants receiving HB		Total			
SRS 2019	SRS 2020	SRS 2019	SRS 2020	SRS 2019	SRS 2020	Change	%
9,599	16,695	31,058	30,745	40,657	47,440	6,783	17%

Figures are as at August of each year

- 8.2 As with the PRS analysis above, the number where a homelessness duty has been applied provides an indication of the likely impact of the 2019/20 housing benefit and universal credit increase.

2019/20 cases where duty owed - end of SRS	x 17%	Total with % added
257	43	300

- 8.3 As before, this suggests a potential additional 40 households being owed a duty on top of the previous annual figure of 1,176. The potential suppressed

demand is shown below with the reduction in the numbers of people requiring a duty in the first three quarters of 2020/21 compared to the same period in 2019/20.

	2019/20 (to Q3)	2020/21 (to Q3)	Difference
Cases where duty owed end of SRS	192	68	-124

- 8.4 The above shows a 65% reduction in 2020/21 to Q3 compared to the previous year which would equate to 167 households. Looking at figures from 2019/20 and 2020/21, an average of 27% of those cases owed a duty went on to access temporary accommodation. Officers have applied this figure to the two different numbers of cases where the Council would owe a homelessness duty. The results are in the below table. For reference, the number of new households the Council accommodated in 2019/20 was 61.

	Number of cases where duty owed	Number needing TA
2019/20 figure + increase in UC claimants	300	81
2019/20 figure + increase in UC claimants + 2020/21 evictions delayed due to moratorium	467	126

- 8.5 As before these are only indicative numbers based on previous trends. In addition, it is not known how many have repayment arrangements with landlords, what the effect of furlough ending will be and what type of households these are (families or singles).

9. Analysis outcome

- 9.1 The analysis in this report is based on current government policy and universal credit data until August 2020. It is almost impossible to accurately predict what impact the lifting of eviction restrictions in the private rented sector will have on the demand for homelessness services but this report sets out some indication of what the position might be. Whilst the data is based on universal credit until the end of August it is worth noting that the steepest increase in the number of claimants was in the early months of the year. Since 1 March 2020 the number of claimants has risen by 85% to almost 77,900 but numbers have been above 70,000 since July 2020.
- 9.2 The modelling suggests that there could be an increase of c25% on current levels requiring Temporary Accommodation once the evictions moratorium and arrangements such as furloughing end. The combined total across the PRS and SRS sectors could be in the region of 600 to 700 more households requiring temporary accommodation. The modelling indicates a figure of 629 (513 + 126 in the tables above) but some allowance will need to be made for

the further increase in claimants after August 2020. This is more than doubling of the increase in activity to date in this financial year where the numbers of households in dispersed accommodation has increased by 309.

- 9.3 The 2021/22 budget allows for investment funding of £6.8m funding for the impacts of covid-19, of which £2.8m is currently uncommitted. There is a further £1.39m to fund the likely ongoing increases in demand agreed as part of the 2020/21 budget process which assumed an increase of 5 households in dispersed accommodation each week. Discussions are also ongoing with MHCLG around funding levels for continued Rough Sleeper Initiative funding along with continued support for the Protect programme encompassing temporary accommodation placements and support for those in Private Rented Sector. It is not yet known if this funding is sufficient to support the expected increase but the position will be monitored closely on an ongoing basis.
- 9.4 The decisions made by the Government on the lifting of lockdown, and announcements made in the Spring Budget, will impact when people present and will also impact on the numbers presenting. At this moment it is not known whether the future demand will be from early 2021/22 or later in the year.
- 9.5 We know that the Courts have a significant backlog and will be slowly working through the cases. We therefore anticipate that although numbers may present as homeless, people will not be asked to leave accommodation immediately and officers will have the time to work with households if they present or get advice before having to leave their accommodation.

10. Mitigation

- 10.1 As mentioned above, officers and partner organisations are working hard to encourage people to access support early so they have as much opportunity as possible to remain in their current accommodation and not become homeless. Advice services are managing much higher demand and helping people access benefits and other support mechanisms to help them through this pandemic. The Court Service will take time to manage the backlog of cases that are waiting to be heard, and therefore the numbers will be a steady approach, rather than a large number at once. This will enable staff to have the time to work with people more effectively.
- 10.2 Officers are in discussions with the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government about the potential future impact of covid-19 on homeless services. Officers are also in discussions with Greater Manchester Combined Authority and other Greater Manchester Local Authorities about how we can collectively highlight the potential demand with MHCLG. Officers are also talking to registered providers about the help and advice they may be able to give to residents in their areas.
- 10.3 The Homelessness Service is placing a much greater emphasis on providing preventative support and to increase their focus on the private rented sector. The service continues to work in close partnership with Housing, Adult Social

Care and Revenues and Benefits. It should be noted that the use of Discretionary Housing Payments can be paid to support residents in receipt of Universal Credit (who also receive the Housing Element included to pay towards their rent), or Housing Benefit to address rent shortfalls. This has been focused on helping residents avoid or reduce rent arrears and to maintain tenancies.

- 10.4 Officers are working closely with the Revenue and Benefits team to ensure people access the appropriate benefits promptly.

11. Statutory Breathing Space Scheme

- 11.1 The Government is aware that there are more people than ever falling into debt through this crisis, which will eventually have an impact on rent, evictions, and demand for homeless services. They have introduced a new statutory 'Breathing Space Scheme' in order to try and help with this. The scheme will commence on the 4 May 2021.

- 11.2 **The Debt Respite Scheme (Breathing Space Moratorium and Mental Health Crisis Moratorium) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020** aims to help people in problem debt to better manage their finances, seek professional debt advice and reach sustainable solutions.

- 11.3 It consists of two sections:

- The Breathing Space Moratorium will provide protections for people in problem debt by pausing enforcement action from creditors and freezing charges, fees and certain interest on qualifying debts for up to 60 days.
- A Mental Health Crisis Moratorium lasts as long as a person's mental health crisis treatment, plus 30 days, which is an alternative way to access the scheme for people receiving mental health crisis treatment.

- 11.4 The Insolvency Service will, on behalf of the Secretary of State, notify creditors when a debt/s has entered a moratorium. When creditors are notified about a moratorium debt, they must pause enforcement action and freeze charges, fees and certain interest for the duration of the moratorium. Creditors must also conduct a reasonable search of their records for any additional debt(s) owed to them by the debtor, as they may be eligible to be added to the moratorium. Creditors must decide what constitutes a reasonable search, based on their circumstances.

- 11.5 This scheme may help individuals who are particularly struggling, but may also have an impact upon struggling businesses and landlords.

12. Conclusion

- 12.1 Although officers have made best estimates of the potential impact, at the moment it is far too early to know what the impact of the lifting of the moratorium and covid-19 will be, and how quickly this will filter to the homelessness directorate. Factors such as:

- How long the country will continue to be in lockdown;
- How quickly the economy will bounce back;
- How long the furlough scheme, and other prevention measures continue;
- How quickly the Court Service will manage to get through the backlog of applications;
- How bailiffs will enforce the Court decisions;
- How many landlords will try and evict people illegally;
- How many people access advice services and benefits early, and so get the help they need, versus ignoring the issue and being evicted;
- How many people have the resilience and resources to be able to get alternative short term help;
- The capacity of advice services to manage new demand and manage the increase in complex cases
- Whether businesses can survive until their potential opening date

will all impact upon the numbers of people who access homeless services, and the speed at which they approach the service.

- 12.2 Officers are working hard with other departments and advice services to ensure that any outcome of the eviction moratorium and covid-19 are mitigated and people are helped to remain in their accommodation and access the right help and advice as early as possible.

Appendix 1

Examples of social media asking people to 'get help early'

<p>If you're behind on rent and worried about losing your home, help is available. Find out about support from our partners Shelter and CAB, and from our Housing Solutions team: https://secure.manchester.gov.uk/info/200117/homeless_people/1428/are_you_homeless_or_at_risk_of_becoming_homeless #CloseTheDoorOnEviction</p>	<p>https://pbs.twimg.com/media/EiHqB7KWoAAqBJ.jpg</p>
<p>Struggling to pay your rent? Are you in rent arrears?</p> <p>Don't let it spiral out of control and risk losing your home, our Housing Solutions team may be able to help you.</p> <p>Get in touch as soon as possible: https://secure.manchester.gov.uk/info/200117/homeless_people/1428/are_you_homeless_or_at_risk_of_becoming_homeless #CloseTheDoorOnEviction</p>	<p>https://video.twimg.com/amplify_video/1350153455294423041/vid/1280x720/eDiirVGrQ1tHL7tk.mp4</p>

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Manchester City Council Report for Information

Report to: Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee –
10 March 2021

Subject: Housing Allocations Policy Review

Report of: Strategic Director, Growth & Development

Summary

This report describes the work undertaken to deliver the new social housing allocations scheme on time despite Covid-19 pressures. While noting that the new scheme has not yet been in operation long enough for impact to be assessed, the current housing register position is consistent with the new scheme working as intended.

Recommendations

The Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee is invited to

1. Comment on the report.
 2. Note that the ability to draw any reasonable conclusions about the effectiveness of the new scheme from the 12-month interim evaluation due at the start of 2022 will be affected by the continuing pandemic and the special measures put in place for the most vulnerable.
 3. Note that the effectiveness of the new scheme will best be evaluated by the planned evaluation after 24 months, at the start of 2023.
-

Wards Affected: All

Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city

n/a

Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	Provide advice and information around other housing options where this may be appropriate - this includes affordable home ownership and the private rented sector.

A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	n/a
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	Ensuring the Policy assists with balancing communities and encouraging potential in partnership with RP partners, using Local Letting Policy where necessary.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	Encouraging RP partners to reduce CO2 emissions and reduce their use of plastics will contribute to a low carbon city as well as zero carbon social homes built. Discussing climate change conversations with tenants of social housing supporting them in adopting a low carbon lifestyle.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	Ensuring people have a settled home that's right for them this will enable them to flourish and contribute within the city.

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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.

- Manchester City Council Part VI Allocations Scheme 2011

- Manchester City Council Part VI Scheme for the Allocation of Social Housing 2020
- Housing Act 1996
- Homelessness Code of Guidance
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessnesscode-of-guidance-for-local-authorities>
- Allocations Code of Guidance
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/allocation-of-accommodationguidance-for-local-housing-authorities-in-england>
- Update on Homelessness and Housing, Neighbourhoods and the Environment Scrutiny Committee Report – Wednesday 17th July 2019
- Report on Housing Allocations Policy Review, Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee – 6th November 2019, Executive – 13th November 2019

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The report to Neighbourhood and Environment Scrutiny Committee November 2019 and to the Executive Committee in November 2019 described how Manchester's current Housing Allocations Scheme had remained fundamentally the same since 2011.
- 1.2 The report provided the context and evidence as to why the Allocations Scheme needed to be reviewed, looking at how, for several years, the turnover of social housing had been reducing while demand had steadily increased. It described engagement with stakeholders to develop proposals while ensuring that the proposals would not have a disproportionate effect on applicants in the protected characteristic groups.
- 1.3 The objectives in undertaking the review of the scheme were that it:
 - Continues to accord with legislation and statutory guidance
 - Provides the means of managing the allocation of a scarce resource (social housing) in a fair and equitable manner assisting those in most need
 - Is transparent and easy to understand
 - Takes into account the need to manage neighbourhoods
 - Takes into account the Homelessness Reduction Act, welfare reforms and the city's Homelessness Strategy
 - Will assist the city deliver its wider commitments in the City Strategy ("Our Manchester") and the Housing Strategy
 - Continues to comply with local authority equality duties
 - Has no unintended adverse impact on other housing practice
- 1.4 The report described how all our Manchester Move partners had been involved in developing the scheme and had agreed to the proposals via the formal consultation. Other key partners such as Manchester Women's Aid, Crisis and Shelter were also included in the consultation. Responses were supportive of the proposed changes.
- 1.5 The review received a lot of media coverage, including on social media. A public exercise, in the form of an online survey, was undertaken during July and August 2019. The majority of responses were very supportive of the proposed changes.
- 1.6 The new Allocations Scheme was approved by the Executive at the November 2019 meeting.
- 1.7 This report provides an update on the process that followed. It describes how partners have worked extremely hard during a most challenging time to ensure the new allocations scheme went into operation without any delay. It also provides a very brief update on the current Manchester Housing Register, and notes that the full effect of the new Allocations Scheme will not be known for some months yet.

- 1.8 As previously agreed, an interim evaluation of the effectiveness of the new allocations scheme will be carried out at the end of this year after the new scheme has been in operation for 12 months, when any unexpected but significant effects can be identified and dealt with. A more informed evaluation of its effectiveness will be carried out after two years (starting November 2022) when the full effects will be more apparent.

2.0 Timetable

- 2.1 The original implementation timetable had for the new scheme to take effect by the end of September 2020.
- 2.2 By January 2020 it was clear that the timetable needed to change in order to allow more time for training and reregistration to take place over the summer period, and also to allow Manchester Move landlords to contact applicants who needed to provide more information or to update their application. Executive Members were kept informed. A new timetable was agreed in February 2020, with an expectation of the new scheme taking effect on 3rd November.
- 2.3 The pandemic then necessitated a robust and objective reconsideration of the timetable during the summer period. Everyone worked extremely hard to keep to the 3 November date despite the pressures and challenges of the pandemic.

3.0 Revising the Manchester Move IT system

- 3.1 Over the first quarter of 2020 the Manchester Move IT team (two people) worked with the council and partners to map out the IT implications of the new scheme and with the IT provider to put the required system changes in place.
- 3.2 Once the system changes had been made, critical systems testing took place over the following few weeks. A council officer was remotely embedded with the Manchester Move IT team to support this work.
- 3.3 The systems testing worked very well. It brought to light some unexpected IT issues that were addressed before the system was tested again and found to be working well with no more significant issues to be addressed.

4.0 Training

- 4.1 Once the system was in place and shown to be working well, the training of Manchester Move users was put in place. This was a huge task and was delivered with diligence against the backdrop of the developing pandemic. The original plans for face to face training had to be scrapped and new training tools and methods had to be developed at very short notice.
- 4.2 The training was delivered by the same three people who had managed the IT system changes. In response to training remotely, extra emphasis was placed

on trainees' feedback and trainers' debriefing after every training session, to ensure the quality and consistency of the training.

- 4.3 The training was delivered in different stages, with the Manchester Move "superusers" trained first, during two weeks in July. Over this period, 58 superusers attended from Manchester Move partners and from the council's homeless service.
- 4.4 The second phase of the training was for the superusers to cascade training to their colleagues ahead of the new versions of the Manchester Move online forms going live on 3rd August. Superusers were sent a training materials pack that included 2 presentations (a half day course and a full day course), timed session plans for both courses and exercises to be completed by participants in the training. This ensured that all trainees were given the same information, which helps to ensure consistency when they are providing support to applicants.
- 4.5 During this phase of the training, the three lead officers encouraged contact from the superusers if they had any questions or needed support.
- 4.6 The third phase of the training programme, from mid-September to the end of October, was the training of external organisations and other services who are not involved in the day-to-day management of rehousing cases, but who often deal with rehousing queries. This included commissioned supported housing accommodation providers, MCC Libraries, homelessness charities, tenants' groups and NHS staff. Over 110 people were trained, of whom 71 were from commissioned supported housing providers.
- 4.7 The overwhelming response to the training was very positive. Trainees and partner organisations were especially thankful to the three officers who made such a huge effort throughout the summer and autumn, first to amend the training programme at very short notice, and then to deliver it so successfully despite the pandemic.

5.0 Communications

- 5.1 This workstream benefitted from the strong interest and leading role of Executive Members, with expert support and contribution from the Communications team.
- 5.2 Communication of the changes to the scheme and how they would affect both current and new applicants was a major contribution to the successful launch of the new scheme.
- 5.3 Key to managing this was sharing information and explanation about why the scheme needed to change and how it was changing. To be as effective as possible, this communication needed to take different forms for different stakeholders.
- 5.4 Stakeholder audiences included:

- Rehousing applicants (people with Manchester Move applications)
- Manchester Move partner landlords
- External organisations, e.g. Shelter, The Pankhurst Trust / Manchester Women's Aid, Saheli, CAB, MACC, etc. – all were happy to share information as appropriate
- Over 60 organisations in the Voluntary and Community Services directory – again, all were happy to share information as appropriate
- MCC service areas
- MPs' offices
- The GMCA – for sharing with the other 9 Greater Manchester districts
- Press and other media

5.5 Communication methods used included:

- Member briefings
- Briefing papers and guidance notes for Manchester Move partners
- Development and distribution of an FAQs paper
- Voiceover PowerPoint presentations
- Producing a scheme summary in different versions
- Updating and adding new information on the Council's website, on the Manchester Move website and on external organisations' websites
- Briefing papers for other council service areas
- Press releases and social media messaging
- Translations of key messages into the top 10 languages used across Manchester
- Online presentations, briefings and Q&A sessions

5.6 Expectations were that the council and the Manchester Move partners would need to deal with a substantially larger than normal number of enquiries from applicants whose priority was changing.

5.7 In the event, there were fewer enquiries than expected due to the extensive communications work and due to all the efforts made by Manchester Move partners in migrating applications, as described in the next section.

6.0 Migration of applications

6.1 There was a strong commitment to minimise the need for applicants to manage moving their information over to the new scheme. As far as it was possible to do so, current applications were carried over into the new scheme and placed into the relevant new scheme band. For the greater part this process was automated, but there was a significant period of personal contact with applicants whose information needed updating in order that we could be confident that their application would be placed in the correct band. This work was undertaken by the Manchester Move partners in a very sensitive and caring manner to avoid people becoming unduly anxious about their application.

- 6.2 782 applicants in the priority bands with missing or out of date information were contacted directly by the Manchester Move partners handling their applications to support them to update their information. A considerable amount of work was then undertaken to look at individual applications and identify any applicants who had priority (bands 1-3) under the old scheme but who might not qualify under the new scheme.
- 6.3 As stated at the November 2019 Executive meeting, data did not exist to enable officers to be definitive about the number affected in this way, but it was estimated at a maximum of 500 from the priority bands, although it was anticipated that most would still qualify once additional information had been submitted for their applications. In the event, the work to support applicants to update their information, followed by detailed work to reassess applications in this category, meant that the actual number no longer qualifying was only 151. Additionally, in recognition of the time spent in priority under the old scheme, Executive Members agreed that these applicants will be offered a “credit” of the length of time they had been on the housing register if they reapply at the point they qualify. By offering this credit, the council has ensured that the scheme rules are being transparently and consistently applied but it is also being sensitive to the rehousing needs of these applicants. With their agreement, these applicants’ details are being retained to facilitate a quick and easy reapplication at the point they qualify.
- 6.4 From August 3rd, new applicants were presented with the new application form with questions that relate to the new policy and were given bands under the new scheme rules in readiness for the November 3rd change over. During these three months, new applicants were accruing time on the register (their award dates) but were not yet allowed to place bids. This kind of arrangement is normal when allocations schemes are in transition and is necessary to avoid having two sets of rules operating simultaneously, effectively requiring two housing registers to be maintained. Importantly, these new applicants were not adversely affected because they would have been very low down shortlists and have no real chance of an offer. Exceptions were made for those new applicants who might have had even a small chance of an offer because they were in band 1 or they wanted non-family or sheltered accommodation. These exceptional cases were handled manually by the Manchester Move partners.
- 6.5 September and October saw the migration of applications across to the new scheme. The migration of applications from the old scheme to the new one was handled very sensitively and very professionally by the Manchester Move member organisations, minimising the need to deal with follow up enquiries and questions.
- 6.6 These actions ensured that all priority applicants (bands 1-3) were in the correct band when the new system went live on 3rd November.
- 6.7 Applications in the non-priority bands (bands 4 and 5) have had their annual review brought forward to ensure that all applications will have been reassessed under the new scheme by the end of March 2021.

7.0 Impact of pandemic

- 7.1 In response to the pandemic, housing partners agreed to backdate vulnerable applicants in band 1 to move them up the queues for homes. Band 1 lets are largely to facilitate downsizing and in response to medical need, domestic violence/abuse and risk to life. At the same time, national moves to help people off the streets meant there was a need to assist move on from temporary and supported accommodation in order to make places available for those who needed them. Hence, move on from supported or temporary accommodation (old bands 2 & 3, and new band 2) was made a high priority in order to contribute to protecting residents and protecting the NHS.
- 7.2 These actions were managed very closely and very successfully by the Manchester Move partners, even while they were making the transition to the new allocations scheme.
- 7.3 Actions in response to the pandemic have been essential and welcomed. They will have to continue until the most serious period of the pandemic is over. This means that the longer-term effect of the new scheme rules on improving allocations to those in greatest need will not start to become clear for some months yet.

8.0 Current position

- 8.1 At this stage it is too early to draw any firm conclusions about how well the new scheme is contributing to help manage access to social homes for those in greatest need. Most homes let during November, December and January were advertised before the scheme changed, and accordingly were let to the old rules. Properties advertised since 3rd November are only just beginning to be let.
- 8.2 The new scheme looks only at housing need. This was a decision that Members took to assist with move on from temporary accommodation in order to help some of those in greatest need have a chance of a social home. Consequently, most homeless applicants who had been struggling in band 3 are now in band 2 and have a much better chance of being rehoused. Because many had been in the reasonable preference categories for some time yet were unable to make successful bids, they have relatively long award dates (also known as “queue dates”) and so are now at the top of shortlists for homes. This means that the early impact of the new scheme is that many more than usual homeless applicants will be at the top of shortlists for properties until the historical band 3 “backlog” has worked through the system. It is likely that this will take some months to clear and, coupled with essential pandemic responses, means that the true effects of the new scheme rules will not begin to be evident until the autumn or later.
- 8.3 The allocations scheme is the method by which the council tries to ensure that the scarce resource (social housing) is made available to those who need it most. In other words, the scheme manages one aspect of the supply of social homes.

- 8.4 The scheme also tries to help manage expectations and the demand for social homes. The new scheme does this in three ways. First, by having the minimum two years continuous residency requirement, as recommended by government. Secondly, by restricting bids for homes to applicants from the priority bands other than for retirement accommodation or non-family homes. Third, and perhaps most importantly, by offering advice and housing options guidance as part of the process to apply to join the housing register.

- 8.5 Table 1 shows the Manchester Housing Register at the end of January 2021, with table 2 for comparison as at the end of December 2019.

Table 1: Manchester Housing Register as at end January 2021

	Bedrooms													
	1		2		3		4		5		6+		totals	
band	no	%	no	%	no	%	no	%	no	%	no	%	no	%
1	443	2.7	176	1.1	86	0.5	105	0.7	21	0.1	17	0.1	848	5.3
2	1452	9.0	2025	12.6	766	4.7	364	2.3	96	0.6	10	0.1	4713	29.2
3	242	1.5	147	0.9	1022	6.3	346	2.1	11	0.1	0	0.0	1768	11.0
bands 1-3	2137	13.2	2348	14.6	1874	11.6	815	5.1	128	0.8	27	0.2	7329	45.4
4	4605	28.5	2517	15.6	1253	7.8	154	1.0	22	0.1	3	0.0	8554	53.0
5	180	1.1	43	0.3	22	0.1	7	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	252	1.6
bands 4+5	4785	29.7	2560	15.9	1275	7.9	161	1.0	22	0.1	3	0.0	8806	54.6
totals	6922	42.9	4908	30.4	3149	19.5	976	6.0	150	0.9	30	0.2	16135	100.0

Table 2: Manchester Housing Register as at end December 2019

	Bedrooms													
	1		2		3		4		5		6+		totals	
band	no	%	no	%	no	%	no	%	no	%	no	%	no	%
1	362	2.5	157	1.1	49	0.3	57	0.4	19	0.1	18	0.1	662	4.5
2	401	2.7	713	4.9	833	5.7	310	2.1	48	0.3	7	0.0	2312	15.8
3	1100	7.5	1,128	7.7	847	5.8	316	2.2	49	0.3	7	0.0	3447	23.6
bands 1-3	1863	12.7	1998	13.7	1729	11.8	683	4.7	116	0.7	32	0.1	6421	44.0
4	862	5.9	763	5.2	410	2.8	38	0.3	3	0.0	1	0.0	2077	14.2
5	2075	14.2	1188	8.1	592	4.1	84	0.6	3	0.0	1	0.0	3943	27.0
6	1084	7.5	659	4.5	319	2.2	74	0.5	14	0.1	1	0.0	2151	14.7
bands 4-6	4021	27.6	2610	17.8	1321	9.1	196	1.4	20	0.1	3	0.0	8171	56.0
totals	5884	30.3	4608	31.5	3050	20.9	879	6.1	136	0.8	35	0.1	14592	100.0

- 8.6 Of note is the fact that demand continues to increase. In just over a year the total number on the register increased by over 1500. More importantly, the number of applicants in priority bands increased by over 900 despite the special pandemic measures put in place to accommodate higher numbers from the priority groups. Not only has the number in priority increased, but the percentage of the register in priority has increased from 44% to 45.4%.
- 8.7 New band 2, as expected, is more than double the size of the old band 2. While this means there is increased competition in band 2 it also means that everyone in the band will have a chance of being rehoused at some point, unlike those in old band 3 who had very little chance.
- 8.8 Over 2,000 applicants in priority bands (13.2% of the whole register and 29% of applicants in priority) need one bedroom homes.
- 8.9 The numbers of applicants who need larger homes is increasing. At the end of 2019, 831 households in priority bands needed a home with four or more bedrooms. At the end of January 2012 that had increased to 970. The turnover of larger homes is very low and most of these households will never be made an offer of a social home. The new allocations scheme helps to manage expectations about securing larger homes by describing what moving groups are permitted. In general terms this means that adult children, unless they are carers or have always lived with the household, are not included. This helps people to understand that they have a far better chance of getting a social home if adult children can make their own arrangements, making smaller homes a real option for smaller households.
- 8.10 When the annual review of applications in the lower bands (bands 4 and 5) is completed, it is likely that a number of applicants not in housing need will be found not to qualify and will be removed from the housing register. As with the assessment of applications in the priority bands, it is not possible to estimate how many applicants might be affected in this way. But it is important to note that these are applicants not in housing need and who would have very little chance ever of making a successful bid. It is also important to note that, although this will reduce the total number of applications on the housing register, it will not affect the number in the priority bands 1-3 and will have no effect on lets.
- 8.11 The average number of bids received for each property advertised on Manchester Move now ranges from 203 bids for one bedroom homes up to 648 for three bedroom homes. The average number of bids across all sizes is around 365.
- 8.12 There would normally be around 1200 homes let in a 6 month period. The pandemic badly affected turnover and lets during April-June when just 300 properties were let. Once restrictions had been eased, turnover and lets recovered to normal and total lets for the 6 month period reached 916. See tables 3 and 4.

Table 3: Manchester Move lets April-June 2020 by band

band	no	%
1	405	44
2	266	29
3	179	20
4	43	5
5	19	2
6	4	1
Total	916	100

Table 4: Manchester Move lets April-June 2020 by property type

bedrooms	no	%	to band1	%
1	247	27	143	58
1 (55+)	118	13	32	27
2 non family	94	10	25	27
2 family	231	25	109	47
3 family	183	20	82	45
3 parlour	17	2	8	47
3 non family	4	0.5	0	0
4 family	17	2	3	18
4 parlour	4	0.5	2	50
5 family	1	0.1	1	100
Totals	916	100	405	44

9.0 Conclusions

- 9.1 Everyone involved worked extremely hard and with enormous commitment to ensure the new allocations scheme was delivered on time against all the extra pressures of the pandemic.
- 9.2 Although the pandemic response coupled with timing means it is far too early to say with certainty that the new scheme is having the desired effect of helping those in greatest need secure a social home, there is some evidence that it is doing so and there is no evidence to the contrary. The planned evaluation of the scheme at the start of 2023, after 24 months, will provide the best assessment. The findings of the planned interim evaluation at the start of 2022, after 12 months, while useful, unavoidably will be compromised by the continuing pandemic responses to house the most vulnerable.

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee
– 10 March 2021

Subject: Overview Report

Report of: Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit

Summary

This report provides the following information:

- Recommendations Monitor
- A summary of key decisions relating to the Committee's remit
- Items for Information - Covid Sitrep Update is to follow
- Work Programme

Recommendation

The Committee is invited to discuss the information provided and agree any changes to the work programme that are necessary.

Contact Officers:

Name: Lee Walker
Position: Scrutiny Support Officer
Telephone: 0161 234 3376
Email: l.walker@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 lists recommendations made by the Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee. Where applicable, responses to each will indicate whether the recommendation will be implemented, and if it will be, how this will be done.

Date	Item	Recommendation	Response	Contact Officer
13 January 2021	NESC/21/02 Neighbourhoods Directorate Budget Proposals 2021/22	Recommend that the Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport considers undertaking an audit of all road safety measures around schools and capital funding be used to fund the delivery of appropriate signage and road markings to improve road safety around all Manchester schools where any deficiencies are identified.	A response to this recommendation has been requested and will be reported back once received.	Cllr Stogia
13 January 2021	NESC/21/05 Manchester Green and Blue Strategy and Implementation Plan, including: Annual update and a report on the Tree Action Plan	Recommend that Officers, in consultation with the Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport explore the options for delivering a programme of tree maintenance training. This training to be made available to all relevant partners, including staff working in schools.	A response to this recommendation has been requested and will be reported back once received.	Cllr Stogia
13 January 2021	NESC/21/06 Monitoring and Compliance – Construction Sites	Recommend that the Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport give consideration to establishing a bespoke Manchester Considerate Constructors Scheme that had to be adhered to by	A response to this recommendation has been requested and will be reported back once received.	Cllr Stogia

		contrators and be included as a mandatory condition of any planning consent.		
13 January 2021	NESC/21/06 Monitoring and Compliance – Construction Sites	Recommend that Officers, in consultation with the Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport arrange a briefing session for Members of the Committee that provides an overview of a range of activities that included, but not restricted to planning and related enforcement; roles and responsibilities and Traffic Regulation Orders.	A response to this recommendation has been requested and will be reported back once received.	Julie Roscoe

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 **1 March 2021**, containing details of the decisions under the Committee's remit is included overleaf. This is to keep members informed of what decisions are being taken and to agree, whether to include in the work programme of the Committee.

Decisions that were taken before the publication of this report are marked *

There are no Key Decisions currently listed within the remit of this Committee.

**Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee
Work Programme – March 2021**

Wednesday 10 March 2021, 2 pm (Report deadline Friday 26 February 2021)				
Item	Purpose	Lead Executive Member	Lead Officer	Comments
Update on evictions in the Private Rented Sector and the impact on the homelessness service	Following the recent announcement of the lifting of eviction restrictions in the Private Rented Sector that had been introduced as a result of Covid-19, this report will describe the impact of these changes on the homelessness service. The report will provide data on the levels of demand and describe the response to this. This report will also provide comparative data on the number of evictions from social housing.	Cllr Rahman	Mike Wright	
Housing Allocations Policy	To receive an update report on the implementation of the new Housing Allocations Policy that went on-line in Sept 2020. This report will include details of any review of the policy that has been undertaken to date.	Cllr Richards	Kevin Lowry Martin Oldfield	Previously considered at NESC Nov 2019.
Overview Report				

Items to be scheduled				
Item	Purpose	Lead Executive Member	Lead Officer	Comments
Landlord Licensing Update	To receive a progress report on the delivery of the Extension to Selective Licensing Schemes that was previously reported to the Committee at their meeting of 2 Sept 2020.	Cllr Richards	Fiona Sharkey	To be scheduled for June 2021 meeting.

