

## **Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee**

### **Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 22 June 2021**

#### **Present:**

Councillor Russell (Chair) – in the Chair  
Councillors Clay, Davies, Hitchen, Kirkpatrick, Lanchbury, B Priest, Robinson, Rowles, A Simcock and Wheeler

#### **Also present:**

Councillor Bridges, Executive Member for Children's Services  
Councillor Craig, Deputy Leader (Finance)

**Apologies:** Councillor Ahmed Ali

#### **RGSC/19/28 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 May 2021 were submitted for approval. A Member requested that the information that had been requested at that meeting in relation to Corporate Property (see ref. RGSC/21/22) be circulated to Members at the earliest opportunity. The Deputy Leader (Finance) stated that she would provide this following the meeting.

#### **Decision**

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 25 May 2021

#### **RGSC/19/29 Future Shape of the Council**

The Committee considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer, which set out the context and background for the Future Shape of the Council Programme, its priority areas of work and benefits to the Council and its residents and how the digital agenda formed a major workstream within the Future Shape programme and how ICT support would be integral to its successful delivery.

Key points and themes of the report included:-

- The Future Council programme objectives and overview of workstreams;
- A detailed introduction to the scope of the digitally integrated council workstream; and
- The role of ICT in the successful delivery of the programme

Some of the key points raised during the Committee's discussions were:-

- An understanding of how the figure of the number of residents who were digitally excluded was arrived at and how was this defined;
- Any digital service needed to be tested from the end user perspective to ensure it was fit for purpose prior to launching;

- The need to prioritise the most deprived wards in the city, noting the experience of residents during Covid;
- The need to work with large national providers to ensure residents were able to access data, noting the positive examples in response to barriers experienced by residents during the pandemic;
- An update was sought on the integration of both health systems and those used by Northwards;
- The CRM system needed to be reviewed to ensure residents could report issues, including the ability to upload photographs and consideration needed to be given to the automatic replies to ensure they were appropriate;
- Premises Licenses were previously available to view online, however they were no longer accessible and was there a reason for this; and
- An update on the timeline and budgets for the delivery of the replacement CRM and SAP systems was requested.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer explained that the report represented a significant programme of change to be delivered in a very challenging financial position. The Deputy Leader (Finance) commented that the report described the ambitions to deliver, noting that there were a number of workstreams to drive this ambition. She stated that this work was not a passive response to continued budget cuts but rather a proactive approach to drive improvements and efficiencies that met the needs of residents.

The Director of Customer Services and Transactions stated that the Digital Agenda was predicated on the needs of residents and improving their access and experience. She described that a Digital Index was being created that collated data from a range of sources that could then be provided at a ward level. She stated that the development of the Digital Index would then assist with the meaningful measurement of progress against an agreed set of criteria. She stated this work was being progressed by the Director of Inclusive Economy and the Manchester Digital Strategy would be reported to the Economy Scrutiny Committee.

The Director of Customer Services and Transactions acknowledged the comment raised by the Member regarding the need to adequately test systems from a user perspective, adding that a number of lessons had been learnt during the pandemic. She stated that it was recognised that systems needed to be appropriate and relevant to the service user and systems should be designed and purchased from the end user perspective. She advised that there was also the requirement to ensure that systems complied with all equalities duties to ensure they were fully accessible.

In response to the specific question relating to premises licenses being available to view online, the Director of Customer Services and Transactions stated that she would investigate this issue following the meeting.

The Deputy Leader (Finance) stated that the Manchester Digital Strategy would include consideration of digital inclusion and she advised that all Members would be consulted and specific ward issues and experiences, such as those raised during the discussion would be captured as part of that process.

The Director of ICT informed the Committee that a significant amount of work and testing was underway to ensure the safe integration of both Health systems and Northwards systems. Regarding the specific question relating to the timeline and budgets for the delivery of the replacement CRM and SAP systems he advised that this would be circulated to all Members of the Committee following the meeting.

The Director of ICT informed the Committee said that work continued to integrate systems across the Council, and IT analysts were working closely with Service Heads to review all systems with the aim of delivering a single view platform that would be device neutral. He advised that the IT department continued to work closely with the estates team, including libraries to ensure the technology and IT facilities were planned and appropriate.

### **Decision**

The Committee note the report and the changes that will be required over the next few years to deliver this important agenda.

### **RGSC/19/30 Domestic Violence and Abuse Funding**

The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods), which set out the current funding arrangement for Domestic Violence and Abuse (DV&A) services across Manchester. It highlighted in particular, new investments that the Council was making in 2021/22 to help further support victims and children and tackle perpetrator behaviour.

Key points and themes in the report included:-

- Nationally and locally, it had been acknowledged that funding provision for DV&A services had historically been piecemeal and short term in nature;
- In total the Council funds £2,268,305 in 2021/22 for DV&A services which included contributions from Manchester Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and the Community Safety Partnership;
- In addition to this, it had recently been confirmed that the Council would receive a further £1,652,996 for 2021/22 from central government in relation to new burdens funding. The funding was guaranteed for three years, but funding allocations for 2022/23 and 2023/24 have not yet been set;
- Decisions on how DV&A funding is used going forward will be informed by the Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy Refresh; and
- A key aim of the new strategy would be to work with services, alongside schools, colleges and universities to support them in helping to prevent abuse, intervene earlier and change attitudes

Some of the key points that arose from the Committees discussions were:-

- Further clarification was requested regarding the accommodation that would be provided for males who were the victims of DV&A;
- Further information of the structure and function of the DV&A Partnership Board;

- Noting the ad hoc and piecemeal funding provided by central government to address DV&A was there strategic oversight of the various spending and funding bids across the city;
- Further information was requested in relation to the New Burdens Funding;
- Further information was requested on the Drive programme;
- Work needed to be undertaken with housing providers to ensure that it was the perpetrator of DV&A that was required to leave the family home; and
- What is the overall cost of DV&A to public services.

The Strategic Lead Integrated Commissioning explained that nationally funding to deliver DV&A services was piecemeal and short term and this approach was challenging when designing services. He advised that Manchester had remained committed to investing in DV&A services over the years of austerity which placed the city in a strong position to respond to the Domestic Abuse Act that placed a new duty on local authorities to provide support to victims in refuges and other safe accommodation. He stated that the new Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy for the city was being developed in partnership with the wider public services, communities and residents, and a draft would be available in the summer.

The Domestic Abuse Reduction Manager advised that the DV&A Partnership Board would replace the Domestic Violence Strategy Group and they would meet in July. She advised that the remit and governance arrangements of the Board would be agreed. She informed the Members that this Board would strengthen the existing relationships and develop new ones with a range of partners across the city. She advised that they were currently working with MACC to ensure that there was VCSE representation on the Board. She further advised that the Board would strengthen the understanding and coordination of funding streams across the city to address DV&A and would assist with reducing any duplication of funding bids.

The Domestic Abuse Reduction Manager stated that a recent report published by Safe Lives had calculated the cost of DV&A was £34k per victim and that she would share the report with the Committee for information. She stated that the New Burdens Funding was in addition to the homelessness fund and would be used to establish Domestic Abuse Specialist Support posts that would deliver an enhanced offer in refuge spaces. She stated that the exact details of these posts were still to be determined and that further information would be provided to the Committee at an appropriate time.

The Domestic Abuse Reduction Manager informed the Committee that as previously described the Domestic Abuse Act placed a new duty on local authorities to provide safe accommodation, and this included using dispersed accommodation that was provided through the homeless service. She further made reference to the DV&A project that was being delivered by the LGBT Foundation in collaboration with local housing providers across Greater Manchester. The Chair stated that the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee would continue to consider and scrutinise the provision of DV&A services provided for different community groups.

In regard to the Drive programme the Domestic Abuse Reduction Manager informed the Committee that Manchester was participating in the national roll out of the programme in the South of the City. She stated that Drive was the Home Office

recommended approach for the management of high-risk high harm perpetrator work and followed a specified model using the Respect accredited standard. She stated this was a multi-agency approach and that an analysis of the impact and outcomes of this programme would be undertaken and the outcomes reported to Members via the appropriate scrutiny committee.

With regard to the issue and the specific case relating to perpetrators of DV&A remaining in the family home the Domestic Abuse Reduction Manager informed the Member that she would discuss this following the meeting.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer stated that she acknowledged the comments expressed by the Committee in relation to the challenges presented by short term funding for such important services. She stated that all options would be considered as part of the budget setting process.

The Chair in concluding this item of business paid tribute to staff and partners working to support all victims of DV&A.

## **Decision**

The Committee notes the report

### **RGSC/19/31 Nursery Funding**

The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director for Children and Education Services, which outlined a set of proposals to support the continued provision of high quality Early Years settings across the City. The report specifically provided an overview of the impact of the current Early Years tendered day-care model (whereby providers offer day-care from a Council owned building), on the Council's duty to oversee sufficient day-care for preschool children across Manchester; the Early Years Budget and ongoing maintenance of Early Years buildings which remain part of the corporate estate.

Key points and themes of the report included:-

- Results of stock condition surveys;
- Review of early years buildings within the portfolio;
- Financial implications – revenue and capital;
- Further actions; and
- Support Provided to Early Years Settings During the Pandemic

The report was also being considered by the Children and Young Peoples Scrutiny Committee on 23 June 2021 and Executive on 30 June 2021.

Some of the key points that arose from the Committees discussions were:-

- Central Government had failed to adequately fund early years provision;
- This inadequate funding had resulted in instability across the sector and that was detrimental to both young people and their families;

- Recognising that the report proposed to bring a level of stability to the sector, across the whole of the city;
- Had the Council given consideration to providing direct provision using Invest to Save analysis, noting the importance of early years provision and the impact this had on other services if not adequately catered for;
- Noting that to deliver the required stability in the market a longer term plan was required and what metrics were considered to ensure the provision was adequate to meet the needs of the population;
- Was the reported time period for the retendering of a site commencing to the site being re-occupied typical; and
- Welcoming the proposal that the Council would have landlord responsibilities included within the Council's existing Asset Management Programme.

The Head of Corporate Estate and Facilities advised that the time period for the retendering of a site commencing to the site being re-occupied was typical. He commented that the decision to incorporate landlord responsibilities within the Council's existing Asset Management Programme would strengthen the inspection regime to ensure premises were safe and compliant with all required standards. He commented that this approach would also present the opportunity to invest in and facilitate the delivery of carbon reduction initiatives through the estates management and contribute to the city's carbon reduction ambitions. In response to a specific question regarding the future development of sites for purposes other than day care provision, he advised that there were mechanisms in place to protect those sites.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer referred to the budget decisions that had been taken in 2011 in relation to the delivery model of day care provision in the context of austerity. She added that nationally the direct provider model is not one that was adopted by Local Authorities.

The Executive Member for Children's Services explained that a range of metrics were used to understand the demand on the sector, including the census; the use of provision and where families accessed these from and birth rates. He commented that the report represented a significant amount of work over a period of years and represented an opportunity to strategically improve and strengthen upon the established relationships with providers across the whole of the city. He stated that the renegotiation of leases would provide an ideal opportunity to discuss and progress issues such as sustainability with providers and support the carbon reduction ambitions of the Council. In response to a specific question regarding a breakdown by use of day care he advised that this data was obtained and could be shared outside of the meeting.

## **Decision**

The Committee endorses the recommendations proposed to the Executive, those being:-

Executive are recommended to:

- (1) Note 17 of 37 leases have been surrendered since December 2015 and the potential impact on the council's ability to meet its 'sufficiency duty'.

- (2) Note the continued negative budget implications on the Early Years budget which continues even if the status quo is maintained.
- (3) Approve the recommendation for the use of each building moving forward.
- (4) Approve the re-negotiation of the current leases by corporate estates with day care providers, making clear the responsibility of the lease holder and the corporate landlord in the re-negotiated lease.
- (5) Support the proposal to include the Early Years estate portfolio in the Council's future Asset Management Programme, at an estimated cost of £0.7m per year.
- (6) Approve a budget increase of £3m, funded by capital receipts, to fund the priority works.

### **RGSC/19/32 Overview Report**

A 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.

A Member requested that the information relating to the Key Decision and Care Homes that had been requested previously be forwarded to the Committee at the earliest opportunity.

### **Decision**

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