

Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 8 March 2022

Present:

Councillor Hacking - In the Chair

Councillors Ahmed Ali, Azra Ali, Andrews, Battle, Connolly, M Dar, Evans, Grimshaw, Hilal, Hussain, S Judge, Rawson, Whiston, Wills and Wilson

Also present:

Councillor Rahman, Deputy Leader

Councillor Akbar, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods

Chief Superintendent Mark Dexter, Greater Manchester Police (GMP)

Apologies:

Councillor Chambers

CESC/22/13 Minutes

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2022 as a correct record.

CESC/22/14 Highway Crime

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) which provided a summary of data and information related to policing roads in the city.

The main points and themes within the report included:

- Statistics on people killed or seriously injured (KSI) in road traffic collisions;
- The local strategy for road policing;
- Greater Manchester Police (GMP)'s key operations in relation to road policing;
- The work of the Road Safety Partnership;
- Initiatives that engage with road users; and
- Joint work involving GMP and the Council's Highways Service.

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

- Recognising the importance of this issue, noting the number of people killed or seriously injured on Manchester roads and residents' concerns that local roads were unsafe;
- That residents were most concerned about local residential roads, rather than the city's major roads;
- That residents wanted action to be taken more quickly when they raised concerns about the safety of local roads;
- That more action should be taken in response to community speed watch;
- To request further clarification on the increase in resources for the Roads Policing Unit;

- Concern that many Members and residents were not aware of some of the initiatives referred to, indicating that communications needed to be improved;
- The importance of transparency in what schemes would be considered and where, if funding became available;
- Whether this work would be placing more pressure on neighbourhood policing teams; and
- Could the statistics in the report be broken down to a ward level.

The Head of Network Management reported that the Council had previously had a larger road safety programme but this had been reduced as part of the wider budget cuts; however, he advised that this year £2 million had been identified to fund road safety schemes and that it was hoped that further funding could be identified for a further programme. He reported that the number of road accidents was reducing nationally and at a Manchester and Greater Manchester level and that positive work was taking place to improve safety. He informed Members about Transport for Greater Manchester (TFGM)'s plans for a Road Danger Reduction Strategy and reported that the Council was reviewing speed limits across the city.

In response to a Member's question, Chief Superintendent Mark Dexter from GMP clarified that the second table within the report, under the title "OP Considerate - Number of reports by nature of report" related to reports where footage of an incident, from a vehicle's dashboard camera or a cyclist's helmet camera had been provided. He outlined how GMP, under Operation Considerate, was standardising the process for responding to this type of reporting and taking the opportunity to educate or prosecute drivers, as appropriate. He reported that from 2011 onwards funding for road safety and road policing had reduced, which had affected GMP's ability to support community speed watch, but that this was now changing. He advised Members that issues could be raised through local policing tasking meetings and that local police teams had capacity and capability to do some work on road safety on local residential streets, with the central Roads Policing Unit becoming involved to tackle more sustained or more serious road safety issues or those on major arterial routes. He advised that some incidents related to people who were normally law-abiding but had on occasion driven without due care and attention or slightly over the speed limit but that there was another group of recidivist offenders who were not insured and were also carrying out other offences, including using the car while carrying out these crimes. He reported that this group tended to create the most danger on the roads as this was a persistent behaviour and that targeting these offenders on the arterial routes would also improve safety on local roads as this group tended to drive in a dangerous manner wherever they drove. He informed the Committee that the number of police officers in the Roads Policing Unit was being increased from 60 to 120 and that the recruitment process had already started, with some recruitment taking place outside of Greater Manchester to recruit officers who already had the requisite skills. In response to a Member's question, he advised that this expansion of the unit would take GMP to just below the national average in terms of resources for this area of work.

Chief Superintendent Mark Dexter acknowledged the point about improving communications about road safety initiatives, which he advised should be promoted through neighbourhood teams and community groups. He advised that social media communications were mainly via Twitter but that he would take on board a Member's

comment that active community groups tended to use Facebook rather than Twitter, as well as communicating the initiatives through Greater Manchester councils and local meetings. He agreed with a Member's comment that information should not just be communicated via social media. The Head of Network Management reported that information was communicated to Members via the Members' dashboard and the Highways Bulletin and that more information could be included on road safety. The Chair expressed concern that some Members were not aware of the Members' dashboard. The Head of Network Management advised that he would look into this.

In response to a Member's question about off-road bikes, including quad bikes, Chief Superintendent Mark Dexter outlined the approaches GMP used to address this issue and some of the challenges this presented, for example, the risks involved in chasing someone on a quad bike, who was often young, not wearing a helmet and not trained in using it. He also responded to issues relating to motorbikes, advising that the no-pursuit policy for motorbikes had been abandoned, outlining the circumstances where pursuit might be used, and reporting that helicopters and drones could also be used where appropriate. He advised that he would take back to GMP Members' strength of feeling about the issues that bikes were causing in their wards. In response to a Member's comment about dangerous cycling by cyclists working for takeaway delivery companies, he advised that he would take this issue forward and look at what could be done to address this, working with the companies concerned and through education and enforcement. He informed the Committee about the work taking place to take pressure off neighbourhoods policing teams.

The Head of Network Management reported that a record was kept of all requests for road safety schemes and that his service also undertook an analysis to understand where there were hotspots across the city and that this information was used if funding opportunities arose. A Member commented that it would be useful for Members to be told that the Council had a record of the request for a scheme in a particular area and that, should funding become available, it would be introduced, so that they could communicate this to residents.

In response to a Member's concerns that road safety measures would only be put in place on a road after there had been a fatality or serious collision rather than listening to local knowledge, the Head of Network Management reported that the Council did not currently have funding for highway improvement schemes; however, he acknowledged that accidents were under-reported and agreed that basing decisions solely on these figures was not always the best approach, that the local community was often aware of how dangerous a road was and that, when funding for these schemes was available, decisions on where to place them should be based on risk. In response to a Member's comments, he assured the Committee that, before any road safety schemes were taken forward, his service would engage with neighbourhood teams and Ward Councillors.

In response to a Member's question, Chief Superintendent Mark Dexter advised that GMP had a unit dedicated to tackling the criminal use of cars and stolen cars, which also had an effect on road safety. He advised that GMP's Intelligence Data Bureau was being reformed and this improvement would enable data to be provided at a ward level in future. In response to a Member's question, he reported that GMP had

been involved in approximately 600 police pursuits within the last year which had, sadly, resulted in a few fatalities, which were subject to national scrutiny and governance, including by the Independent Office for Police Conduct.

The Chair thanked officers and Chief Superintendent Mark Dexter and asked the Chief Superintendent to pass his thanks onto GMP officers for the work they did.

Decision

To note the report.

CESC/22/15 One Year Extension to the Our Manchester Voluntary & Community Sector and Development Fund Grants Programmes 2022/23

The Committee received a report of the Director of Policy, Performance and Reform which summarised the approach to extending the grant funding arrangements in place with voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations currently funded through the Our Manchester Voluntary and Community Sector (OMVCS) and Development Fund Grants Programmes. The paper presented the process and timescales for this extension throughout the 2022-23 financial year.

The main points and themes within the report included:

- The process timeline;
- The extension proposal form, which asked funded organisations to answer a series of mandatory questions; and
- The RAG rating of organisations and actions where there were concerns.

The Policy and Programmes Manager (Communities and VCSE) informed Members that the Council intended to undertake a co-design process with key stakeholders over the next year in relation to a further Our Manchester VCS Fund running from 2023 to 2026, subject to budget approval. He suggested that the Committee receive a report on this in the next municipal year.

In response to a Member's comment about how the Council was measuring the funded organisations against zero carbon targets, the Policy and Programmes Manager reported that a light touch approach was being taken as this had not been a specific requirement in the original fund but that he expected the refresh of the scheme to reflect the Council's commitments on zero carbon. In response to a Member's question, he informed the Committee how the organisations that had been awarded funding had been monitored to ensure the money was being spent in the way it was intended, while allowing some flexibility, for example, for some services to be delivered online during the pandemic. In response to a Member's request that the organisations' quarterly monitoring reports be scrutinised by the Committee, the Chair advised that it was not appropriate for the Committee to carry out contract management but that these reports could inform the content of future reports to the Committee.

Committee Members raised a number of questions which related to the forthcoming review of the Fund, including how organisations, particularly smaller grassroots

groups, which were not currently in receipt of funding could access funding in the next round, how these groups could be supported to get into a position where they were able to successfully bid for funding, how social enterprise organisations could access the fund, Members' involvement in the review and ensuring that black and Asian communities benefited from the fund.

The Deputy Leader advised that the State of the Sector report provided some of the information Members were interested in and that this would be circulated to the Committee. He reported that he would arrange sessions for Members to input into the review of the fund. The Chair welcomed that Members would be able to contribute to the review.

Decision

To note the report.

CESC/22/16 Overview Report

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

Members noted that this was Councillor Hacking's last meeting as Chair of the Committee and thanked him for his work over the last four years.

Decision

To note the report and agree the work programme.