



Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee

Date: Thursday, 7 September 2023

Time: 10.00 am

Venue: Council Antechamber, Level 2, Town Hall Extension

Everyone is welcome to attend this committee meeting.

There will be a private meeting for committee members only from 9:30am on Thursday, 7 September 2023 in Room 2006, Level 2, Town Hall Extension.

Access to the Antechamber

Public access to the Council Antechamber is on Level 2 of the Town Hall Extension, using the lift or stairs in the lobby of the Mount Street entrance to the Extension.

There is no public access from any other entrance.

Filming and broadcast of the meeting

Meetings of the Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee are 'webcast'. These meetings are filmed and broadcast live on the Internet. If you attend this meeting you should be aware that you might be filmed and included in that transmission.

Membership of the Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee

Councillors - Simcock (Chair), Andrews, Brickell, Connolly, Davies, Evans, Kilpatrick, Kirkpatrick, Lanchbury, Rowles and Wheeler

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

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meetings held on Thursday, 20 July 2023 and Thursday, 24 August 2023.

4a. Minutes of the meeting held on 20 July 2023

5 - 14

4b. Minutes of the meeting held on 24 August 2023

15 - 18

5. Changes to Council Tax Support Scheme from April 2024

19 - 56

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer.

This report proposes changes to the Council's Council Tax Support Scheme to ensure that the scheme remains fit for purpose in response to cost-of-living challenges and the transition of most working age residents in receipt of welfare benefits onto Universal Credit.

The Chair of the Committee has also invited ACORN to submit a written representation, which is appended to this item.

6. Update from the Revenues and Benefits Unit

To Follow

7. Artificial Intelligence and Automation

57 - 72

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer.

This report sets out what automation means for the Council as there are many different technologies associated with automation,

one of which is Artificial Intelligence. Section 1 provides an introduction for this report written by ChatGPT.

8. Resident and Business Digital Experience Programme (RBDxP) Progress Update 73 - 86

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer.

This report provides an update on the Resident and Business Digital Experience Programme (RBDxP), the Programme's approach to user engagement and progress made in the procurement of new technology to replace the Council's existing Customer Relationship Management (CRM) System, eForms and integration technology. The report also provides an update on the ongoing improvements that the Revenues and Benefits service are introducing to improve how the Council interacts with residents and businesses which compliments the RBDxP.

9. 2024/25 Budget Process 87 - 98

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer.

This report provides an update on the current position of the Medium-Term Financial Plan and the planned approach to the 2024/25 budget process.

10. Overview Report 99 - 128

Report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit.

This report provides the Committee with details of key decisions that fall within the Committee's remit and an update on actions resulting from the Committee's recommendations. The report also includes the Committee's work programme, which the Committee is asked to amend as appropriate and agree.

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 Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee areas of interest include finances, Council buildings, staffing, corporate and partnership governance as well as Council tax and benefits administration.

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. To help facilitate this, the Council encourages anyone who wishes to speak at the meeting to contact the Committee Officer in advance of the meeting by telephone or email, who will then pass on your request to the Chair for consideration. Groups of people will usually be asked to nominate a spokesperson. The Council wants its meetings to be as open as possible but occasionally there will be some confidential business. Brief reasons for confidentiality will be shown on the agenda sheet.

The Council welcomes the filming, recording, public broadcast and use of social media to report on the Committee's meetings by members of the public.

Agenda, reports and minutes of all Council Committees can be found on the Council's website www.manchester.gov.uk.

Smoking is not allowed in Council buildings.

Joanne Roney OBE
Chief Executive
Level 3, Town Hall Extension,
Albert Square,
Manchester, M60 2LA

Further Information

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

Charlotte Lynch
Tel: 0161 219 2119
Email: charlotte.lynch@manchester.gov.uk

This agenda was issued on **Wednesday, 30 August 2023** by the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit, Manchester City Council, Level 2, Town Hall Extension, Manchester M60 2LA

Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 20 July 2023

Present:

Councillor Simcock (Chair) – in the Chair
Councillors Brickell, Connolly, Davies, Kilpatrick, Lanchbury and Wheeler

Also present:

Councillor Rahman, Statutory Deputy Leader
Councillor Akbar, Executive Member for Finance and Resources

Apologies: Councillors Andrews and Evans

RGSC/23/35 Interests

Councillors Connolly and Wheeler declared a personal interest in items 8 and 12 - MCC Housing Services & Equans contract extension – and would remain in the meeting for the duration of discussions.

RGSC/23/36 Minutes

Members received and considered the minutes of the previous meeting. It was requested that the minutes be amended under minute number RGSC/23/31 to include a statement made by the Executive Member for Finance and Resources that the Council should see progress in the use of insourcing as a delivery model within 3 years.

Decision:

That the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 22 June 2023, be approved as a correct record subject to the amendment as detailed above.

RGSC/23/37 Review of Development Agreements

The committee considered a report of the Director of Strategic Housing and Development and the Head of Development and Investment Estate which outlined the Council's use of development agreements along with the governance arrangements in relation to the negotiation, management and monitoring of development and associated agreements over Council land and buildings.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Non-standardisation of approach within agreements in place;
- The Council's formal corporate Joint Venture arrangements;
- Overage and performance-related profit, with PwC commissioned to undertake a peer review of overage arrangements;

- How due diligence was undertaken, including the use of a checklist and form for developing Joint Ventures and agreements; and
- The best practice principles of overage.

Key points and queries that arose from the committee's discussions included:

- What was meant by 'reputational factors', and whether the Council would reject a tender on these grounds;
- How reputational factors would be taken into consideration in regard to Joint Ventures;
- Noting the peer review of overage arrangements being undertaken by PwC, and querying who the Council's peers were;
- Whether ethical considerations were taken into account when awarding contracts; and
- Whether Joint Ventures were subject to procurement regulations and non-commercial matters.

The Head of Development and Investment Estate explained that the Development team worked closely with colleagues across the Council through the Best Value Working Group and the due diligence process to review, enhance and bolster governance arrangements within Development. He also stated that a dashboard in relation to development agreements and overages would be included within the Annual Property Report, which was listed on the Committee's work programme for a future meeting.

In response to queries around what was meant by 'reputational factors', the Head of Development and Investment Estate stated that this referred to the ability and track record of a company and how they consulted and worked with local communities.

The Director of Development stated that Manchester was an investable city, with significant interest in opportunities to collaborate with the Council. He explained that there were a series of measures and de-risking opportunities to ensure the Council works with the right partners who could deliver on economic outputs, such as new homes, new skills and investment.

The Head of Development and Investment Estate reiterated the Council's focus on outputs within development agreements and explained that delivery milestones were contained within each contractual framework. Checks and balances were also undertaken to examine the nature of an organisation, their corporate structure and their income streams through a procurement exercise, development agreement or land transaction. A framework had been developed in collaboration with Corporate Governance to ensure assurance prior to entering into an agreement with a tender.

The Head of Development and Investment Estate explained that PwC were a multi-disciplinary organisation with significant experience in management, contracts and finance. He stated that PwC had experience in working with a number of local authorities and organisations and were skilled in the area of the review. The review included undertaking a forensic review of some of the development agreements which the Council already had in place and would report back to the Council.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer stated that the Council placed great importance on due diligence when considering Joint Ventures. This included best consideration for land procurement or transactions and ensuring that this was transparent.

In response to a member's query regarding ethical considerations, the Executive Member for Finance and Resources highlighted that there was not a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to awarding contracts. He stated that each Joint Venture would be awarded on their own merit and that any future risk would be mitigated against.

The City Solicitor reiterated that each Joint Venture would be awarded on individual merit. There were a variety of factors which could be taken into account when considering a Joint Venture and this could include some political and ethical factors, although these could not be explicitly listed.

Decision:

That the report be noted.

RGSC/23/38 Our Town Hall Project - Progress Update

The committee considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer which provided an update on the progress of the refurbishment and partial restoration of the Town Hall and Albert Square under the Our Town Hall (OTH) project.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background to the OTH project;
- Providing an update on the operating model and social value;
- Progress against key performance indicators (KPIs);
- Challenges experienced since the Notice to Proceed (NTP);
- The current financial position, noting that the project team had extensively sought opportunities to reduce cost pressures;
- The programme end date would not be confirmed until January 2024 when the position would be clearer; and
- The project was seeking additional funding of £29m to fund works until the end of December.

Key points and queries that arose from the committee's discussions included:

- What mechanisms were in place to ensure that higher costs were not a profit-making opportunity for contractors and suppliers;
- Whether any of the challenges and discoveries, such as out-of-true lifts, could have been foreseen earlier in the project;
- What the budget position would look like in January 2024;
- Whether officers would still recommend the same level of borrowing for the project, given the current position;
- The time at which officers became aware of delays, and how this was communicated to members and residents;

- Whether there were any financial implications affecting Lend Lease;
- If any cost mitigation measures were in place to reduce the need for additional funding;
- The impact of rising interest rates;
- How the building will be operated and when more information could be provided on this;
- Whether there was any certainty on the completion date for the project; and
- Whether a definitive completion date and final revenue budget would be available at the next update.

In opening the item, the Chair explained that he and some committee members had recently visited the Town Hall, which they found useful and were impressed by the enthusiasm of officers working on the project.

The Statutory Deputy Leader stated that the Council had a duty to preserve the Town Hall for future generations as a symbol of democracy and civic pride and that the House of Commons Restoration Team recently visited the site.

The Project Director stated that this was the largest heritage project in the country and acknowledged that this posed unique challenges.

In response to a query regarding what mechanisms were in place to ensure that higher costs were not a profit-making opportunity for contractors and suppliers, the Project Director stated that this was traditionally undertaken through competitive tension, which ensured a supply chain that was motivated and had capacity to undertake work. He noted, however, that there was a reduced appetite within the supply chain since the Covid-19 pandemic due to perception of risk and staff shortages. Members were advised that a significant number of tenders had withdrawn toward the end of the tender process, which reduced the competitive tension and meant that some contracts had to be awarded to the most expensive tender.

The Project Director explained that problems with lifts were unknown prior to works beginning and required major engineering exercises. He explained that a contingency plan had been developed and broken down by individual packages to identify the appropriate levels of risk in design, procurement and buying, construction and discovery.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer highlighted that the last report to the committee predicted a budget increase of £17m to address emerging pressures. She stated that there had been a concentrated period of work and officers were near to fully understanding the challenges posed by the building. She reiterated the commitment to keeping members and the public informed on progress.

In response to a query regarding whether officers would still recommend the same level of borrowing for the project, given the current position, the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer stated that the Council created a significant reserve to address the capital financing costs of both Our Town Hall and Factory International. She also explained that prior to the project, two floors in the Town Hall were out of

use and there were issues with stonework and heating, and that key considerations had been taken into account.

The Project Director explained that there was a significant contingency of £49m at Notice to Proceed stage and the risks of discovery were recognised. He stated, however, that the Council could not have foreseen the impacts of hyperinflation, market pressures, redesign and delay claims. He advised that the project team had been working hard since Notice to Proceed (NTP) to mitigate overrun costs and programme.

With regards to a query around the financial implications affecting Lend Lease, members were advised that the Council's contract with Lend Lease governed how they would be rewarded and how they must perform. It was stated that the Council was currently in receipt of delay claims amounting to £25m and some of these claims had been submitted by Lend Lease. These would be assessed and would be awarded if found to meet the contractual terms.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer also expressed the Council's commitment for the Town Hall to be open and accessible to residents and the wider public, highlighting the Visitor Centre that would form part of the building. She stated that work was underway to develop a large Civic Quarter and further information would be provided as part of the budget process for 2024/25. Members were also advised that officers were examining the costs of running the estate to ensure sustainability in the future.

The Project Director explained that the biggest risk currently facing the project was further delay. He stated that there was still £10m-worth of works packages to procure, which would remove inflationary risk to procurement by the end of 2023. There remained risks around discovery and having to reorder materials at higher prices.

In response to a question on interest rates, it was explained that high interest rates had implications for the Council's borrowing costs but it was stated that the Council did not borrow for individual projects but to meet the overall capital cash flow requirements. Significant work had been undertaken to examine the impact of this for future capital programmes but the financing reserve for the Our Town Hall project to meet financing charges was sufficient to cover interest rate increases and to not increase pressure on the revenue budget.

The Chair expressed his hope that there would be a definitive cost and completion date for the project at the next update to the committee in early 2024, to which the Project Director explained that the hiatus of risk would have passed by then which could provide a clearer position.

Decision:

That the committee

1. notes the progress made, and
2. endorses the recommendation to the Executive.

RGSC/23/39 MCC Housing Services and Equans Contract Extension (PART A)

The committee considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer and the Director of Housing Services, which sought the committee's endorsement to extend the Council's contract with Equans to provide housing repairs and maintenance services to the Council's housing stock for a further 3 years.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- An overview of and background to the Council's contract with Equans;
- The fundamental deliverables of the contract;
- Performance of the contract, with most performance indicators being met across repairs and compliance;
- The delivery model assessment being undertaken for future delivery, assessing whether to continue to outsource in the longer-term or to bring the service in-house; and
- The role of the Housing Advisory Board.

The Executive Member for Housing and Development explained that the contract applied to the Council's housing stock in the city centre and North Manchester and that this was a vital service which affected thousands of residents. He stated that the proposal was to extend the current contract for three years from April 2024, with an additional break clause each year to allow the Council to assess alternative delivery models, such as insourcing, and to ensure best value and quality of service.

In response to a comment by a member that the Housing Advisory Board had not yet met to discuss the proposal, the Executive Member clarified that the Board had been established for over a year and met every 2 months. He noted that the Board would meet that evening to discuss the proposal and that there had been preliminary discussions already.

Members noted that a Part B report on the proposal was listed further on the agenda and would reserve their comments for discussion under that item.

Decision:

That the Part A report be noted.

RGSC/23/40 Overview Report

The committee received a report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit which provided details of key decisions that fell within the Committee's remit and items for information previously requested by the Committee. The report also included the Committee's work programme, which the Committee was asked to amend as appropriate and agree.

Decision:

That the report be noted and the work programme agreed.

Factory International Progress Update (PART A)

The committee considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer and the Strategic Director (Development) which provided an update on the delivery of Aviva Studios including progress with the construction programme; the evolution of Factory International; the success of the recent MIF23 festival; and the conclusion of the naming rights agreement with Aviva for Aviva Studios.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Providing an introduction to the project;
- The benefits already being felt by the works;
- The social value provided by The Factory Academy and Factory Futures;
- The social value created through the construction works;
- Progress and key performance indicators;
- The position of the project at July 2023;
- The fundraising strategy;
- That the naming rights had been awarded to Aviva and would be called Aviva Studios; and
- Contractual arrangements.

Key points and queries that arose from the committee's discussions included:

- Why the most recent report to the Committee in October 2022 was not listed within the background documents;
- Reiterating a previous request that any future requests for increased funding include a breakdown of all funding increases over the project's lifespan;
- Whether any costs were charged to architects as a result of design challenges;
- If delays due to water damage caused by inclement weather could have been avoided;
- Noting the importance of engaging with local businesses, particularly small enterprises, and querying how this would be undertaken; and
- Welcoming the community and social value work.

The Statutory Deputy Leader introduced the item and stated that the delivery of Aviva Studios had brought in more than £106m of new money into Manchester and would result in an additional £1.1bn in the economy over a period of time. It would also create over 1500 jobs and would serve as a catalyst for investment into the cultural sector. He highlighted that Lonely Planet had named Manchester one of the top 30 destinations to visit and Time Out named The Factory as one of the best things to visit in 2023. He stated that positive feedback had been received from residents and the cultural sector.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer apologised for the most recent report not being included in the list of background documents and explained that this had been done in error. She also committed to providing a full history of the funding increase within the final account at a future meeting, to which members requested this be provided sooner.

In response to a query regarding design challenges, the Director of Capital Programmes explained that two design architect firms had been commissioned to ensure the acoustic capacity and fire safety of the building. He stated that the cost of this had been borne by the Council and that this was necessary to ensure the integrity of the building.

The Director of Capital Programmes explained that inclement weather also described the cold snap experienced at the beginning of the year, which led to water damage as a result of condensation. He stated that discussions were ongoing regarding the management of works as part of the commercial considerations.

The Director of City Centre Growth and Infrastructure provided assurances that the development would have a positive impact on local businesses and the Council would engage with these as Aviva Studios became embedded within the city. She also highlighted that twelve food and beverage venues were planned for St John's to support the area.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer also wished to place on record the Council's excitement to work and partner with Aviva on this project.

Decision:

That the committee

1. notes the report, and
2. endorses the recommendations being made to the Executive.

RGSC/23/42 Exclusion of Press and Public

Decision:

That the press and public be excluded during consideration of the following item which involved consideration of exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of particular persons and public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

RGSC/23/43 Factory International Progress Update (PART B)

The committee considered a confidential report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer and the Strategic Director (Development), which update on the fundraising for the construction project and the conclusion of the naming rights agreement with Aviva for Aviva Studios, supplementary to item 5.

The committee discussed and queried a number of issues and points within the report.

Decision:

That the committee

1. notes the report, and
2. endorses the recommendations being made to the Executive.

RGSC/23/44 MCC Housing Services and Equans Contract Extension (PART B)

The committee considered a confidential report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer and the Director of Housing Services, which detailed the key considerations accounted for in recommending extending the contract for housing repairs and maintenance for up to three years.

The committee discussed and queried a number of issues and points within the report.

Decision:

That the committee does not endorse the recommendation to extend the MCC Housing Services contract with Equans up to a maximum of three years.

This page is intentionally left blank

Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 24 August 2023

Present:

Councillor Simcock (Chair) – in the Chair
Councillors Andrews, Connolly, Evans, Kilpatrick, Lanchbury and Wheeler

Also present:

Councillor White, Executive Member for Housing and Development
Councillor Karney
Councillor Leech

Apologies: Councillor Brickell and Davies

RGSC/23/45 Interests

Councillors Connolly and Wheeler declared a personal interest in items 4 - Call in of decision: MCC Housing Services – Equans Extension – and would remain in the meeting for the duration of discussions.

RGSC/23/46 Call In - Extension of Repairs and Maintenance contract for MCC Housing Services

The committee considered a Key Decision that had been called in by five members of the Council to ascertain whether this complied with the Council's decision-making process. If the Committee believed that this had not been complied with, it could then refer the matter back to the decision-maker for reconsideration.

On behalf of those who had signed the request, Councillor John Leech was invited by the Chair to explain the reasons for calling in the decision made by the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer to extend the current Equans Housing Services Contract for the provision of the housing operations repairs and maintenance service for up to 3 years from April 2024 to April 2027.

Councillor Leech explained that he proposed the call-in of this decision due to concerns around value for money, and whether the decision constituted the best option for tenants, the workforce and the Council; the use of subcontractors and agency staff by Equans; and concerns raised by Unite the Union regarding health and safety, changes to the sickness absence policy, a failure to address accusations of bullying and harassment towards their members and a lack of trust in management. He also highlighted how the Council was still addressing historic challenges from the transfer of the Northwards housing stock to the Council's management.

Councillor Leech stated that the report failed to provide any evidence to support the outcome of the feasibility study, which suggested that extending the current contract with Equans provided best value for money. He also queried whether alternative options had been fully considered.

In line with Council procedures, the Committee were invited to ask questions of Councillor Leech. In response to a query from the Chair regarding how Councillor Leech thought the decision-making process had been deficient, he reiterated that there was a lack of justification as to why alternative options for the contract had been dismissed. Councillor Leech also stated that he believed it would be difficult for the committee to endorse the decision without information on the alternative options considered, although he acknowledged the time sensitivity around the contract extension.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer and the Director of Housing Services were in attendance to answer questions of the Committee.

As the decision-maker, the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer explained that Key Decision Notice was published following consultation with the Housing Advisory Board, Major Contracts Oversight Board and the Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee. She stated that the Council was still in the process of embedding the former Northwards housing stock into the Council's oversight and this limited capacity to undertake another major insourcing project.

She addressed some of Councillor Leech's concerns and explained that the Council had and would continue to consider alternative options for the housing repairs and maintenance contract. She stated that value for money could be demonstrated through feedback from tenants and advised that the Head of Internal Audit had been requested to undertake a quality assurance exercise on the key performance indicators (KPIs) for the contract.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer also stated that the Council took the concerns raised by Unite the Union seriously but reiterated that resolving HR issues was the responsibility of Equans.

Members sought clarification from the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer on the alternative options for the contract and the timescales around employing a break clause in the contract in the first year of its extension. The committee was advised, in response, that it would be ambitious to exercise a break clause within the first year and that the Council would need to be mindful of the volume of work that this would impact. She reiterated that work was underway to understand future opportunities for the contract.

In response to other queries, it was confirmed that work to scope the Internal Audit review of KPIs was underway and confirmation would be given at a later date as to when the outcome of this review would be reported to the Audit Committee. It was

also confirmed that the Major Contracts Oversight Board considered reputational issues when considering any contract.

The Director of Housing Services informed the Committee that there was an overall satisfaction rate of 82% amongst tenants in June 2023 and that there were now more directly employed staff members on the contract with hopes of increasing the number of apprentices employed. He also recognised the benefit of expert knowledge afforded by employing subcontractors and agency staff. The Committee was also advised that specific issues would be taken seriously and raised directly with Equans management team once made aware.

In response to a member's query around those tenants that did not respond to the satisfaction survey, the Director of Housing Services explained that work was being undertaken to build stronger connections with tenants and acknowledged that the survey was a representative sample with more work needed to guarantee a higher response rate.

The Director of Housing Services also provided assurances that he would continue to engage with Unite the Union on the issues raised by their members.

The Executive Member for Housing and Development explained that the delivery of repairs and maintenance within the housing stock was a key priority for the Council and that this was a frequent subject of discussion at the Housing Advisory Board, where tenant representatives were in attendance. He highlighted that it was a political decision to pursue insourcing where appropriate and reiterated previous comments made that the concerns raised by Unite the Union were taken seriously.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer, the Director of Housing Services and the Executive Member for Housing and Development all expressed their confidence that the correct decision-making processes had been followed.

The Chair called Councillor Pat Karney as a witness in his capacity as the elected member of a ward in which much of the Council's housing stock was located. Councillor Karney reiterated the importance of having a good housing repairs service. He stated that it would be irresponsible to bring this service in-house whilst the Council was still working to embed the old Northwards service and that doing so would have a detrimental impact on residents.

In coming to their decision, members of the Committee noted that 12 months would not be sufficient time to bring the service in-house but welcomed ongoing work to identify ways in which this could be brought forward in future. Members recognised the enormity and complexity of bringing the service in-house and acknowledged the improvements made so far. They welcomed the suggestion of yearly reviews of the contract and insourcing capacity and acknowledged the need to get the contract right and learn lessons.

Decision: (5:1:1)

That the decision taken by the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer on 24 July 2023 to extend the current Equans Housing Services Contract for up to 3 years from April 2024 to April 2027, for the provision of the housing operations repairs and maintenance service, should stand.

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee – 7 September 2023

Subject: Changes to Council Tax Support Scheme from April 2024

Report of: Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer

Summary

This report proposes changes to the Council's Council Tax Support Scheme. The changes are proposed so that the scheme remains fit for purpose in response to cost-of-living challenges and the transition of most working age residents in receipt of welfare benefits onto Universal Credit.

The report seeks approval from members to formally consult on the proposals that change the scheme.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

1. consider and comment upon the contents of the report and the steps being taken to continue to deliver a Council Tax Support Scheme that is cost effective and provides optimum support to low-income households within the available budget, and
 2. note that the outcome of the consultation will be reported back to Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee and for approval by the Executive and Full Council in January 2024.
-

Wards Affected: All

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

The service seeks to operate in a way designed to avoid unnecessary travel by looking to provide services online, by phone or in the local area where possible.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - the impact of the issues addressed in this report in meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty and broader equality commitments

Consideration of equality, diversity and inclusion issues for Manchester residents have been taken into account in the development of the proposals. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed.

Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS/Contribution to the Strategy
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	The service operates policies and procedures developed to support the development of a thriving and sustainable city.
A highly skilled city: world class and home-grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	The service operates policies and procedures developed to support the development and growth of home-grown talent within the service and across the city.
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	This report provides proposals on providing support to residents on a low income helping to maintain conditions that make Manchester a progressive and equitable city.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	N/A
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	N/A

Full details are in the body of the report, along with any implications for:

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Risk Management
- Legal Considerations

Financial Consequences – Revenue

The proposed changes are intended to make the Council Tax Support Scheme more generous for working age households and easier and more cost effective to administer.

The proposed changes are estimated to cost c£700k - £770k.

Financial Consequences – Capital

None

Contact Officers:

Name: Carol Culley
 Position: Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer
 Telephone: 0161 234 3406
 E-mail: carol.culley@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Lee Owen
Position: Head of Revenues, Benefits & Customer Services
Telephone: 0161 245 7525
E-mail: lee.owen@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Matthew Hassall
Position: Head of Corporate Assessments
Telephone: 0161 234 5451
E-mail: matthew.hassall@manchester.gov.uk

Background documents (available for public inspection):

No background documents to include.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report outlines the background, options and recommendations for delivering a local Council Tax Support Scheme (CTSS) for the Council from 1 April 2024.
- 1.2 Most of the changes only affect working age claimants in receipt of Council Tax Support. Non-working age claimants (pensioners) are only affected by the proposed changes in point 4.2 where are proposing to increase the maximum length of time we can backdate Council Tax Support.
- 1.3 While the government requires local authorities to design and administer their own local CTSS for working-age people with no maximum support requirements, councils are required by law to pay up to 100% Council Tax Support (CTS) for pension-age people.
- 1.4 The report also provides details of how consultation and Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out.

2. Impact on residents

- 2.1 The main change proposed will make the Council's CTSS more generous for working-age households. The current CTSS pays up to 82.5% of the Council Tax bill leaving 17.5% to pay. The proposed CTSS would pay up to 85% of the Council Tax bill leaving 15% to pay.
- 2.2 Extending the CTS backdating period for working-age claims from six-months to 12-months allows greater flexibility to support vulnerable residents and reduces avoidable requests for reconsiderations and appeals.

3. Background

3.1 Council Tax in Manchester

- 3.1.1 Bills are sent for over 228,000 Council Tax accounts amounting to more than £225 million each year. Of this around one third of residents receive financial support in the form of Council Tax Support totalling £44.973 million annually (figures at 31 May 2023, including precepting authorities charges). This is split between £28.941m working-age and £16.033m pension-age households.
- 3.1.2 Table 1 shows the property breakdown and benefit levels split across Council Tax bands (snapshot position as at 31 May 2023).

	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Band F	Band G	Band H
Number of properties	136,144	42,415	36,912	19,847	6,694	3,185	1,259	145
Number of these that are empty	1,482	390	312	301	112	61	35	8
Number of working age households in receipt of partial Council Tax Support	3,445	644	337	76	24	6	1	0
Number of working age households in receipt of maximum Council Tax Support	23,975	2,679	1,071	230	61	12	3	0
Working age total	27,420	3,323	1,408	306	85	18	4	0
Number of pension age households in receipt of partial Council Tax Support	3,018	448	319	76	28	8	0	0
Number of pension age households in receipt of full Council Tax Support.	9,144	1,328	668	197	40	12	1	0
Pension age total	12,162	1,776	987	273	68	20	1	0

(Table 1)

3.2 Background to the current scheme

- 3.2.1 The localisation of Council Tax Support Schemes (CTSS) was announced in the 2010 Spending Review and in April 2013 Government transferred administration and responsibility of the Council Tax Benefits (CTB) system from DWP to Local Authorities with the stated aim of giving councils stronger incentives to cut fraud and get people back into work.
- 3.2.2 The CTSS was funded with a 10% reduced budget in 2013/14, with each authority designing and implementing a localised scheme and holding responsibility for any shortfall or surplus on the CTS budget. To achieve savings Manchester designed a CTS scheme which required all working age claimants to contribute to their net Council Tax liability (ranging from 8.5% in 2013/14 to 17.5% in 2018/19).
- 3.2.3 In April 2014 CTS funding was rolled into the Revenue Support Grant (RSG), where it has been assumed CTS has reduced year on year in line with the cuts to Manchester's Settlement Funding Assessments (SFA).
- 3.2.4 As at 31 May 2023, the notional 2023/24 CTS funding from Government is estimated at £24.159m, while the cost of the scheme is £44.973m, giving rise to a funding gap of £20.814m.
- 3.2.5 Table 2 below has been produced by the Council and models the loss in funding since 2012/13 due to CTS.

Manchester CTS Scheme - reduced in proportion to SFA	2012/13	2013/14	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24*
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
CTB / CTS Scheme Funding	(42,310)	(37,390)	(22,281)	(22,644)	(22,674)	(22,846)	(24,159)
CTS Transition Grant	-	(997)	-	-	-	-	-
Total Govt funding	(42,310)	(38,387)	(22,281)	(22,644)	(22,674)	(22,846)	(24,159)
<i>SFA reduction applied %</i>			(5.2%)	1.6%	0.1%	0.8%	5.7%
Council Tax foregone	42,310	39,849	38,896	42,617	42,789	42,664	44,973
Net Loss (incl preceptor)	0	1,462	16,615	19,973	20,115	19,818	20,184

(Table 2) *forecast as at 31 May 2023

3.3 Manchester's previous CTS schemes

3.3.1 The schemes for working age residents have allowed for a maximum award based on the available budget and the savings that have had to be made to help the Council deliver a balanced budget.

3.3.2 2013/14 Scheme

The Council received a transitional award and Council Tax Support was based on a maximum of 91.5% of the amount due meaning that all working age claimants had to pay at least 8.5% of their liability.

3.3.3 2014/15 to 2016/17 (3 years)

Council Tax Support was based on a maximum of 85% of the amount due meaning that all working age claimants had to pay at least 15% of their liability.

3.3.4 2017/18 to 2018/19 (2 years)

Council Tax Support was based on a maximum of 82.5% of the amount due meaning that all working age households had to pay at least 17.5% of their liability.

3.3.5 It should be noted that pension age households are protected by government and are entitled to support for up to 100% of their Council Tax liability.

3.4 Manchester's current CTS scheme

3.4.1 2019/20 to present (5 years)

As with the 2017/18 – 2018/19 CTSS Council Tax Support was based on a maximum of 82.5% of the amount due meaning that all working age households have to pay at least 17.5% of their liability.

3.4.2 Manchester's current CTSS for working-age households who are not on Universal Credit continues to be based on the default provisions offered by the government in 2012 and where possible uses the DWP assessment of income and needs, minimising the need for further means-testing by the local authority.

3.4.3 The difference is that from 2019/20 the Council introduced a banded scheme for working-age households who are on Universal Credit (see Table 3).

Current bands and award levels

Income Band	CTS Award
No excess Income	82.5%
Excess income £0.01 to £25.00	70%
Excess income £25.01 to £50.00	45%
Excess income £50.01 to £75.01	30%
Excess income £75.01 to £80.00	12%
Excess income over £80.00	Nil award

(Table 3)

3.5 Reasons for introducing a banded scheme

3.5.1 The main drivers for and advantages of operating the banded scheme were:

- Avoiding frequent trivial changes in Universal Credit (UC), thereby reducing,
 - The need to reassess entitlement and issue CTS notification letters
 - The volume and cost of rebilling for Council Tax
 - The need to re-profile payments and changes to direct debits and standing orders
 - Impacts on 'current year charge' recovery work
- A new claim for UC is treated as a claim for CTS (provided where the UC claimant has told DWP that they want to claim Council Tax Support)

3.5.2 The banded scheme was also designed with the aim of smoothing the 'cliff edge' for households when moving between income bands or becoming overscale for CTS.

4. Options for consideration

The following changes are offered for consideration.

4.1 Increase the maximum CTS award to 85% for working-age households

4.1.1 Increasing the maximum amount of CTS for working-age households from 82.5% to 85% and increasing the UC bands by 2.5% in alignment offers greater support for many of Manchester's poorest households.

4.1.2 Tables 4a. and 4b. show the current 2023/24 Council Tax charges and the amount left to pay after the maximum 82.5% CTS award is applied; and the amount left to pay if a maximum 85% CTS award was in operation.

Property CTax Band	2023/24 bill (full charge)	Amount to pay after 82.5% CTS award	Amount to pay after 85% CTS award	Reduction in amount to pay in year
Band A	£1,313.00	£229.78	£196.95	£32.83
Band B	£1,531.83	£268.07	£229.77	£38.30
Band C	£1750.67	£306.37	£262.60	£43.77
Band D	£1,969.50	£344.66	£295.43	£49.24
Band E	£2,407.16	£421.25	£361.07	£60.18
Band F	£2,844.82	£497.84	£426.72	£71.12
Band G	£3,282.50	£574.44	£492.38	£82.06
Band H	£3,939.01	£689.33	£590.85	£98.48

(Table 4a.)

Property CTax Band	2023/24 bill (single-person charge)	Amount to pay after 82.5% CTS award	Amount to pay after 85% CTS award	Reduction in amount to pay in year
Band A	£984.75	£172.33	£147.71	£24.62
Band B	£1148.87	£201.05	£172.33	£28.72
Band C	£1313.00	£229.78	£196.95	£32.83
Band D	£1477.13	£258.50	£221.57	£36.93
Band E	£1805.37	£315.94	£270.81	£45.13
Band F	£2133.62	£373.38	£320.04	£53.34
Band G	£2461.88	£430.83	£369.28	£61.55
Band H	£2954.26	£517.00	£443.14	£73.86

(Table 4b.)

4.1.3 Table 5 shows the Council Tax Support Universal Credit banded scheme and the amount of Council Tax left to pay for a property in Band A. The figures are for the current scheme and for the proposed 2.5% increase in CTS.

Band of income	Current support	Amount to pay after CTS award	Proposed 2.5% increase in CTS	Amount to pay after CTS award
£0.00 over applicable amount	82.5% of Council Tax	£229.73	85%	£196.95
£0.01 to £25 over	70%	£393.90	72.5%	£361.08
£25.01 to £50 over	45%	£722.15	47.5%	£689.33
£50.01 £75 over	30%	£919.10	32.5%	£886.23
£75.01 to £80 over	12%	£1,155.44	14.5%	£1,122.61
£80.01 over	No Support		No support	

(Table 5)

4.1.4 Table 6 shows the cost of increasing CTS to 85% and the UC bands by 2.5% based on individual data on the 2023/24 Council Tax levels and the number of claimants as at 1 June 2023. It shows the Council's share of the cost at

£699,682 (excluding the Police and Crime Commissioner, GM Fire & Rescue and Mayoral preceptors based on the 2023/24 Council share at 82.17% of the 2023/24 bill).

2023/24 CTS Caseload	No. of cases	Current cost as at 1 June 2023	Revised Cost of CTSS/UB bands +2.5%	Increase in Cost (incl preceptors)	Increase in Cost to Council only
Working Age UC	18,747	£15,800,548	£16,272,625	£472,077	£387,885
Working Age Non-UC	13,808	£12,284,132	£12,663,607	£379,475	£311,798
Pension Age*	15,315	£15,924,840	Nil	Nil	Nil
Total	47,870	£44,009,520	£28,936,232	£851,552	£699,682

(Table 6) *Pension age claimants are already in receipt of 100% CTS

4.1.5 Table 7a. shows the cost of increasing the CTSS offer by 2.5% (based on individual system data) with a 2.99% increase in Council Tax (the Council's share only). The Government will confirm the referenda limits for 2024/25 Council Tax increases later in the year, usually in either the Chancellor's Autumn Statement or Provisional Finance Settlement in December. This shows an increase in cost of £720,603.

2024/25 at 2.99% increase (MCC share only)	No. of cases	2023/24 costs (MCC only)	2024/25 (+2.99% Ctax increase)	Plus cost of CTSS/UC bands +2.5%	Overall increase from 2023/24	Increase due to +2.5% CTSS offer
Working Age UC	18,747	£12,982,603	£13,370,783	£13,770,265	£787,662	£399,482
Working Age Non UC	13,808	£10,093,321	£10,395,112	£10,716,232	£622,911	£321,120
Pension Age	15,315	£13,084,728	£13,475,962	£13,475,962	£391,233	Nil
Total	47,870	£36,160,653	£37,241,856	£37,962,459	£1,801,806	£720,603

(Table 7a)

4.1.6 Table 7b shows the cost of increasing the CTSS offer by 2.5% (based on individual system data) with a 4.99% increase in council tax on the Council's share only. This shows a cost of £734,596.

2024/25 at 4.99% increase (MCC share only)	No. of cases	2023/24 costs (MCC only)	2024/24 (+4.99% Ctax increase)	Plus cost of CTSS/UC bands +2.5%	Overall increase from 2023/24	Increase due to +2.5% CTSS offer
Working Age UC	18,747	£12,982,603	£13,630,435	£14,037,675	£1,055,072	£407,240
Working Age Non UC	13,808	£10,093,321	£10,596,978	£10,924,335	£831,013	£327,356
Pension Age	15,315	£13,084,728	£13,737,656	£13,737,656	£652,928	Nil
Total	47,870	£36,160,653	£37,965,069	£38,699,666	£2,539,013	£734,596

(Table 7b)

4.1.7 Appendix 1 provides examples of how increasing the maximum level of CTS from 82.5% to 85% may apply in certain scenarios.

4.2 Backdating

4.2.1 The Council's CTSS currently allows backdating of up to six months. Cases may also be backdated for up to six months in cases where Universal Credit has been awarded or changed and the new award means the claimant qualifies for CTS.

4.2.2 Extending the backdating period for up to one year, where the applicant shows good cause, would allow more Council Tax arrears to be cleared for some residents who have struggled to manage their finances and debts. In 2022/23 we backdated 1,727 CTS cases. Of these 162 were pension-age cases and 1,565 were working-age cases. The total cost of backdating last year was £115,000. Most cases do not need backdating for the full six months to award the additional eligible period of CTS. On this basis it is unlikely we would be required to backdate many cases for a full year if we introduced this change.

4.2.3 Extending backdating for CTS cases to 12 months may increase our backdating costs by 20%. This would increase the costs for backdating to £138,000. If we increase CTS awards to 85% and increase Council Tax by 4.99% then the cost for backdating cases would rise to approximately £150,000.

5. Consultation

5.1 The Council has a duty to consult on its local Council Tax Support scheme. This includes the precepting authorities in Greater Manchester (the Fire and Police).

5.2 Following consultation with the precepting authorities the consultation is planned to take place across six weeks between 2 October 2023 and 12 November 2023.

- 5.3 The consultation process will be delivered by means of an online questionnaire; 30,000 paper forms issued to Manchester households; and 1,300 paper forms made available to members and through libraries and housing offices.
- 5.4 The results and appraisal of the consultation responses along with the final proposals will be bought back for comment by the Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee and for approval by the Executive and Full Council in January 2024.

6. Equality Impact Assessments

- 6.1 The Council is undertaking a comprehensive Equality Impact Assessment of the proposals. The assessment will consider in detail what impact the proposals could have on the nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- 6.2 The results and appraisal of the consultation responses along with the final proposals bought back for comment by the Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee and for approval by the Executive and Full Council in January 2024 will be accompanied by the Equality Impact Assessment.

7. Key Policies and Considerations

7.1 Risk Management

- 7.1.1 There is a risk of increased demand and budget pressure resulting from an increase in households needing assistance or existing claimants' income reducing.
- 7.1.2 The future demand and impact cannot be determined with any certainty so will be subject to ongoing review in developing and adapting the scheme cognisant of budget restrictions.

7.2 Legal Considerations

- 7.2.1 The Council is under a duty to consult on any substantive changes to its Council Tax Support Scheme, and it is important that such consultation takes place at a time when proposals are still at a formative stage and gives sufficient reasons for any proposal to permit a person to give an informed response. Adequate time must be given for consideration and response, and the product of consultation must be conscientiously taken into account in finalising any proposals. As set out in the report it's also important that the Council carries out an Equality Impact Assessment of the proposals.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1 The estimated additional cost to the Council, based on current caseload figures, of moving to a CTS scheme in 2024/25 with a maximum CTS Award of 85% for working-age households and adjusting the UC excess income bands upwards by 2.5% to maintain parity, is £699,682.
- 8.2 Applying an assumed 2.99% increase in Council Tax across the working-age and pension-age caseload indicates a total additional cost to the Council in 2024/25 of £720,603.
- 8.3 Applying an assumed 4.99% increase in Council Tax across the working-age and pension-age caseload indicates a total additional cost to the Council in 2024/25 of £734,596.
- 8.4 Extending the backdating period from six-months to 12-months carries an estimated cost to the Council of £35k in 2024/25, allows greater flexibility to support vulnerable residents and reduces avoidable requests for reconsiderations and appeals.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 Scrutiny Committee is requested to:
 - 1. Consider and comment upon the contents of the report and the steps being taken to continue to deliver a Council Tax Support Scheme that is cost effective and provides optimum support to low-income households within the available budget.
 - 2. Note that the outcome of the consultation will be reported back to Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee and for approval by the Executive and Full Council in January 2024.

Appendix 1

These examples show how much a household on CTS currently have to pay towards their Council Tax and how much they will have to pay next year assuming an increase in CTS of 2.5% and an increase in their Council Tax bill.

Example 1

Current Situation

Single person living in a Band A property. They are entitled to 25% off their bill because they live on their own. Their only income is Employment and Support Allowance. Their Council Tax bill before Council Tax Support is awarded is £984.75. The Council Tax Support award is £812.42, this leaves them with £172.33 to pay themselves.

Proposed 2.5% CTS increase with a 2.99% Council Tax increase

Their Council Tax bill before Council Tax Support is awarded is £1,014.19. The Council Tax Support award is £862.06, this leaves them with £152.13 to pay themselves.

Proposed 2.5% CTS increase with 4.99% Council Tax increase

Their Council Tax bill before Council Tax Support is awarded is £1,033.89. The Council Tax Support award is £878.8, this leaves them with £155.08 to pay themselves.

This page is intentionally left blank

Appendix 2 - Draft Council Tax Support Scheme

Manchester City Council

Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2024

effective from 1 April 2024

Introduction

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 abolished Council Tax Benefit and the Local Government Finance Act 2012 made provision for local authorities to devise their own schemes for a Council Tax Support discount to assist people on low incomes to pay their Council Tax.

People over pension age are protected by regulations requiring a local scheme to retain most features of the former Council Tax Benefit scheme. People below pension age are covered by a locally defined scheme that is subject to only limited national prescription.

The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012 (SI 2012/2885) set out the scheme provisions that local authorities must adopt for people over pension age and additionally prescribe a small number of provisions that local authorities must incorporate into their local scheme for people of working age. These regulations will be maintained across time.

The Council Tax Reductions Schemes (Default Scheme) (England) Regulations 2012 (SI 2012/2886) prescribed the scheme that would be a local authority's local scheme if the local authority failed to make a local scheme by 31 January 2013. As such, these regulations will not be maintained beyond that date as any local authority on which the default scheme was imposed will have that as its local scheme and will be responsible for maintaining it.

Both of these regulations were amended for the first year of the scheme by the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 (SI 2012/3085) to uprate amounts in line with the general 2013 Social Security uprating. Regulations changing the scheme for subsequent years are set out in the Annexe at the end of this Scheme.

Manchester's scheme for people of working age is based on the government's default scheme subject to the modifications specified below. The Council at its meeting of **31 January 2024** decided to make this scheme, applicable from 1 April

2024. It is a revision of the Council's 2013 and subsequent Council Tax Support Schemes. Through powers it delegated to the City Treasurer it has been further revised from 1 April 2023 to incorporate updated amounts for applicable amounts, disregards and non-dependant deductions. Note that the 2017, 2018 and 2019 upratings reflected the freeze on basic applicable amounts while amounts for disability and carers were increased in line with inflation and new non-dependant deduction rates and their related income bands equivalent to the prescribed values for people over pension age have been applied.

Part A

Council Tax Support for people of pension age

For a person to whom regulation 3 (a) of the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012 applies (a "pensioner"), the classes of person entitled to Council Tax Support under this scheme for any week are classes A, B and C as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 1 of those regulations and the provisions of those regulations, amended as may be from time to time, shall apply,

save that

1. In paragraph 1 of schedule 5 of those regulations (disregard of pensions paid for war disablement and to war widows and war widowers), the amount to be disregarded shall be the whole of that income.
2. The amount of the family premium shall continue to align to the equivalent for people of working age unless the government prescribes a higher amount.
3. In matters not prescribed by the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012, the provisions of the Council Tax Reductions Schemes (Default Scheme) (England) Regulations 2012 as they relate to pensioners shall apply.

Part B

Council Tax Support for people of working age

For a person to whom regulation 3 (b) of the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012 applies (a "person who is not a pensioner"), the classes of person entitled to Council Tax Support under this scheme for any week are those prescribed in paragraphs 16 and 17 of the Schedule to the Council Tax Reductions Schemes (Default Scheme) (England) Regulations 2012 (Class D and Class E) and the provisions of

- Parts 1 to 3 and schedules 7 and 8 of the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012 as subsequently amended,

- The Council Tax Reductions Schemes (Default Scheme) (England) Regulations 2012, and
- The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2012

shall apply,

save as follows:-

People of Working Age

1. For the avoidance of doubt, a person who is not a pensioner shall be treated as a pensioner if he is one of a couple and the other member of that couple has reached the qualifying age for state pension credit and neither member of the couple is
 - (a) a person on income support, on an income-based jobseeker's allowance or on an income-related employment and support allowance, or
 - (b) a person with an award of universal credit.

Maximum Council Tax Reduction

2. In paragraph 29 (1) of the Default Scheme, for a person who is not a pensioner and who is not in receipt of Universal Credit, the amount of a person's maximum council tax reduction in respect of a day is 85% of the amount A/B where—
 - (a) A is the amount set by the authority as the council tax for the relevant financial year in respect of the dwelling in which he is a resident and for which he is liable, subject to any discount which may be appropriate to that dwelling under the 1992 Act; and
 - (b) B is the number of days in that financial year, less any deductions in respect of non-dependants which fall to be made under paragraph 30 (non-dependant deductions: pensioners and persons who are not pensioners).

Assessment of income and capital

3. In paragraph 20 of schedule 8 of the Default Scheme (disregard of pensions paid for war disablement and to war widows and war widowers), the amount to be disregarded shall be the whole of that income.

Delay in reporting changes

4. Paragraph 107 of the Default Scheme is subject to the proviso that where an applicant (or any person acting on his behalf) fails to notify a relevant change of circumstances in accordance with paragraph 9 of Schedule 8 to the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012 (SI 2012/2885)(reproduced in paragraph 115 of the Default Scheme) and that change would result in an increase in the amount of a reduction, the amount of

the reduction granted shall not be increased for any day before the day on which the authority received notification of that change.

Uprating

5. The Council shall review the amounts specified in this scheme (these being those set in the 2018 scheme) before 1 April 2019 and thereafter annually, having regard in particular, but not exclusively, to
 - (a) the level of funding to be provided by the Secretary for State for Communities and Local Government,
 - (b) figures prescribed in the Default Requirements for pensioners, and
 - (c) comparable figures in the Housing Benefit scheme.

The resulting figures for 2023 are set out in Appendix 1 below.

Alternative maximum council tax reduction

6. Paragraph 18, Part 8 and Schedule 4 of the Default Scheme shall not apply.
7. For the words “classes D to F” in the Default Scheme there shall be substituted the words “classes D and E”.

Family Premium

8. The provisions set out in regulations 2 and 4 of the Housing Benefit (Abolition of the Family Premium and date of claim) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 [SI 1857 of 2015] to exclude the family premium from the applicable amount of a new applicant shall apply to the applicable amount for Council Tax Support from 1 April 2017 for new claims made on or after 1 April 2017 and for existing applicants where a first child is born or a child joins a household that does not include children on or after 1 April 2017.

Applicable amounts for children

9. The provisions set out in The Social Security (Restrictions on Amounts for Children and Qualifying Young Persons) Amendment Regulations 2017 [SI 376 of 2017] to exclude, with exceptions, additional applicable amounts in the Housing Benefit scheme for a third or subsequent child born or joining the household on or after 1 April 2017 shall apply equally in the assessment of the applicable amount for Council Tax Support.

[Note that The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2017 (SI2017/1305) makes corresponding provision for people of pension age to be included in the scheme.]

Temporary absence from home

10. Where a person of working age is absent from Great Britain for more than four weeks, the provisions of the Housing Benefit scheme set out in the Housing

Benefit and State Pension Credit (Temporary Absence) (Amendment) Regulations 2016 (S.I.2016 No.624) shall apply also to Council Tax Support.

[Note that The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016 (SI2016/1262) makes corresponding provision for people of pension age to be included in the scheme.]

Part C

Provisions common to people of pension age and people of working age

Transitional

1. A person entitled to Council Tax Support in respect of 31 March 2024 or who has made a timely claim for Council Tax Support in respect of 31 March 2024 and whose claim has not yet been determined shall be treated as having made an application for a reduction under this scheme from 1 April 2024.

Technical amendments

2. The Council shall review and amend this scheme as appropriate to reflect changes to legislation referenced in this scheme, changes to the Council Tax scheme itself, decisions of the courts, new sources of income, for example allowances paid under government schemes, and such other matters that appear to require technical amendment to maintain the coherence and intentions of this scheme.

Reviews and appeals

3. Where the provisions of this scheme align with those of the Housing Benefit scheme, the Council will apply the findings of a Lower or Upper Tier Tribunal on Housing Benefit as being applicable to the amount of a reduction under this scheme unless a valuation tribunal determines otherwise.
4. The Council may review and change any decision relating to a reduction to correct an accidental error or to take into account new caselaw relevant to the decision in question but shall be under no obligation to do so in respect of entitlement in any previous financial year.

Application of reductions to account and suspension of changes to reductions and of further reductions

5. The Council will apply a reduction under this scheme to the relevant Council Tax account for the remainder of the relevant financial year, thereby reducing the amount of Council Tax payable. The Council may adjust this amount at any time during or after the relevant year as a result of changes to, or the end of entitlement to, the reduction.

6. The Council may suspend any adjustment to the amount of a reduction or the award of a further reduction if there is doubt about a person's entitlement to or the amount of a reduction but in such a case shall take all reasonable steps to resolve such doubts as soon as practical. The Council may also suspend any adjustment to the amount, or further award, of a reduction if an applicant does not provide information or evidence that is reasonably required within one month of the request for such information or evidence and may end the reduction from the date the information or evidence was requested if it is not provided within one month of the date of the suspension.
7. Where the Council decides that the amount of a reduction should be reduced, it will usually reduce the amount applied to the account but reserves the right to waive the application of all or part of that reduction in cases of "official error" where the applicant could not be considered to have caused or contributed to the error, had no reason to doubt the amount of the reduction awarded and could not be expected to pay the increased liability for Council Tax quickly without difficulty. Adjustments to a reduction for the remainder of the financial year from the date of the decision to change the amount of a reduction will always be applied.

Additional disregards of income and capital

8. Payments made under section 49 of the Children and Families Act 2014 (personal budgets and direct payments) as defined in paragraph 66 of Schedule 5 (sums to be disregarded in the calculation of income other than earnings) and paragraph 61 of Schedule 6 (capital to be disregarded) of the Housing Benefit Regulations 2006 shall be fully disregarded.

Time limit for notifying a change

9. The period of 21 days specified as the period during which an applicant must notify a change likely to affect the amount of a reduction is extended to one month to align with the provisions of the Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit (Decisions and Appeals) Regulations 2001, Regulations 7(2)(a), (3), 8(3)(5) and Regulation 9.

Effective date of change for CTS as a result of an award or increase of a DWP benefit

10. When the Council has awarded a reduction under this scheme and the claimant, or a member of their family, becomes entitled to a DWP benefit or has an increase in the amount of a DWP benefit from a date after the start of the claim, the provisions of The Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit (Decisions and Appeals) Regulations 2001 Regulations 7(2)(i) and 8(14) will apply to the award of CTS as they would to an award of Housing Benefit.

Cases where income equals the applicable amount

11. For the avoidance of doubt, the entitlement of an applicant whose assessed income is the same amount as their applicable amount is to be treated according to the provisions of Class A in the case of a person who is a pensioner or class D for a person who is not a pensioner.

Energy Bills Rebate

12. Where a resident is entitled to and receives an Energy Bills Rebate payment this will be disregarded in determining their entitlement to a reduction under the Council Tax Support Scheme. This is in accordance with The Council Tax (Demand Notices and Reduction Schemes) (England) (Amendment) Regulation 2022, Regulation 16

Backdating

13.(1) Where an applicant makes an application under an authorities scheme which includes (or where the applicant subsequently requests should include) a period before the application is made; and from a day in that period up to the date that the applicant made the application (or subsequently requested that the application should include a past period), the applicant had continuous good cause for failing to make an application (or request that the application should include that period), the application is to be treated as made on the date determined in accordance with sub paragraph 2

(2) That date is the latest of

- a) the first day from which the applicant has good cause
- b) the day one year before the application was made
- c) the day one year before the date when the applicant requested that the application should include a past period

Paragraph 13 is in addition to the provision in The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements)(England) Regulations 2012, Schedule 8, Paragraph 6, which allows backdating for an applicant who is a pensioner of up to three months without the requirement for the applicant to demonstrate good cause.

Part D

Additional provisions in respect of people entitled to Universal Credit

1. A person for whom the Council receives both an electronic notification of a new claim for, and subsequently a related first payment of, Universal Credit from the Department for Work and Pensions shall be deemed to have made a claim for a reduction under this scheme on the first day of entitlement to Universal Credit to which that notification of first payment refers.
2. Where an award of a reduction under this scheme is ended because an associated award of Universal Credit has ended or reduced but that award of Universal Credit is reinstated (whether at the same rate or at a different rate) or increased to a level at which an award of a reduction under this scheme would be appropriate within a period of six months, a new claim for a reduction is

required. A new claim in these circumstances shall be treated as made on the date on which entitlement to Universal Credit resumed or was increased or six months before the day on which the claim is actually received, whichever is the later.

2. The amount of an award in respect of a day under this scheme for a person entitled to Universal Credit shall be a percentage of the amount set by the authority as the council tax for the relevant financial year in respect of the dwelling in which he is a resident and for which he is liable, subject to any discount which may be appropriate to that dwelling under the 1992 Act, divided by the number of days in that financial year, less the daily rate of any deductions in respect of non-dependants which fall to be made, and that percentage shall be the percentage specified in the following table according to the band in which their excess income falls.

Excess weekly income greater than	Excess weekly income no more than	% reduction of Council Tax liability
£80.00	-	Nil
£75.00	£80.00	14.5%
£50.00	£75.00	32.5%
£25.00	£50.00	47.5%
£0.00	£25.00	72.5%
-	£0.00	85%

3. Where the Council receives notification from the Department for Work and Pensions of a change to the amount of excess income for Universal Credit and the changed assessment does not result in an alteration to the amount of a reduction under this scheme, the Council is not required to notify the claimant of its recording of that change.

Note : the following figures will be amended for 2024 based on the uprating figures released later in 2023.

Appendix 1

Uprated amounts from 1 April 2023 for people of working age

The amounts set out in the Schedule to the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Default Scheme)(England) Regulations 2012 as amended by the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2012, and as uprated in Manchester City Council's Local Council Tax Support Schemes for 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019,2020,2021 and 2022 are further amended as follows:-

Non-dependant deductions

In paragraph 30 (non-dependant deductions) for sub-paragraph 1, substitute “(1) Subject to the following provisions of this paragraph, the non-dependant deductions in respect of a day referred to in paragraph 29 are in respect of a non-dependant aged 18 or over, £4.20 x 1/7” and sub-paragraphs 2 and 4 shall cease to have effect.

- (a) in sub-paragraph (1)(a) for “£12.85” substitute “£14.15”;
- (b) in sub-paragraph (1)(b) for “£4.20” substitute “£4.60”;
- (c) in sub-paragraph (2)(a) for “£224.00” substitute “£236.00”;
- (d) in sub-paragraph (2)(b) for “£224.00”, “£389.00” and “£8.55” substitute “£236.00”, “£410.00” and “£9.40” respectively;
- (e) in sub-paragraph (2)(c) for “£389.00”, “£484.00” and “£10.70” substitute “£410.00”, “£511.00” and “£11.80” respectively.

Applicable amounts for persons who are not pensioners

In Schedule 3 (applicable amounts: persons who are not pensioners), the amounts are uprated as follows—

- (a) in column (2) of the Table in paragraph 1—
 - (i) in sub-paragraph (1)(a) and (b), for “£77.00” substitute “£84.80”;
 - (ii) in sub-paragraph (1)(c), for “£61.05” substitute “£67.20”;
 - (iii) in sub-paragraph (2), for “£77.00” substitute “£84.80”;
 - (iv) in sub-paragraph (3), for “£121.05” substitute “£133.30”;
- (b) in column (2) of the Table in paragraph 3, in each place in which it occurs, for “£70.80” substitute “£77.78”;
- (c) in paragraph 4(b), for “£17.85” substitute “£18.53”;
- (d) in the second column of the Table in paragraph 17—
 - (i) in sub-paragraph (1)(a), for “£36.20” substitute “£39.85”;
 - (ii) in sub-paragraph (1)(b), for “£51.60” substitute “£56.80”;
 - (iii) in sub-paragraph (2)(a) and (b)(i), for “£69.40” substitute “£76.40”;
 - (iv) in sub-paragraph (2)(b)(ii), for “£138.80” substitute “£152.80”;
 - (v) in sub-paragraph (3), for “£68.04” substitute “£74.69”;
 - (vi) in sub-paragraph (4), for “£38.85” substitute “£42.75”;
 - (vii) in sub-paragraph (5)(a), for “£27.44” substitute “£30.17”;
 - (viii) in sub-paragraph (5)(b), for “£17.75” substitute “£19.55”;
 - (ix) in sub-paragraph (5)(c), for “£25.35” substitute “£27.90”;
- (e) in paragraph 23, for “£30.60” substitute “£33.70”;
- (f) in paragraph 24, for “£40.60” substitute “£44.70”.

Annexe

Regulations amending prescribed requirements of the scheme after 1 April 2013

from	By	Effects
13 March 2014	The Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013 (Consequential Provisions) Order 2014 (SI 2014/107)	Recognises the introduction of same sex marriage.
1 April 2014	The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 (SI 2013/3181)	Uprating and minor technical amendments
1 April 2014	The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 (SI 2014/448)	Additional uprating figures
1 April 2014	The Social Care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013 (Consequential Modifications and Savings) Order 2014 (SI 2014/513).	Technical updates in respect of pensioners' capital.
1 April 2015	The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2014 (SI 2014/3312)	Uprating; to align provisions in respect of EEA jobseekers with those in the Housing Benefit scheme; and minor technical matters.
1 April 2015	The Care Act 2014 (Consequential Amendments) (Secondary Legislation) Order 2015 (SI 2015/643)	Updates the definition of "blind" and other minor technical amendments.
5 April 2015	<u>The Shared Parental Leave and Statutory Shared Parental Pay</u>	Updates definitions relating to paternity pay and shared parental pay

	<u>(Consequential Amendments to Subordinate Legislation) Order 2014 (SI 2014/3255)</u>	
26 May 2015	The Deregulation Act 2015 (Consequential Amendments) Order 2015 (SI 2015/971)	Removes reference to an obsolete body
1 April 2016	The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 (SI 2015/2041)	Uprating; to remove the family premium for elderly claimants from 1 May 2016 with transitional protection for existing cases; and minor technical matters.
6 April 2016	The Pensions Act 2014 (Consequential, Supplementary and Incidental Amendments) Order 2015 (SI 2015/1985)	Covers introduction of New State Pension
6 April 2016	The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (Consequential Amendments) (Secondary Legislation) Regulations 2016 (SI2016/211 – W.84)	Updates the definition of “blind” and other minor technical amendments.
1 April 2017	The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016 (SI2016/1262)	Uprating; and to apply more restrictive rules on eligibility for elderly claimants who are temporarily absent abroad.
3 April 2017	The Employment and Support Allowance and Universal Credit (Miscellaneous Amendments and Transitional and Savings Provisions) Regulations 2017 (SI2017/204)	Technical changes resulting from the removal of the Work Related Activity Group component from Employment and Support Allowance.
6 April 2017	The Pensions Act 2014 (Consequential, Supplementary and Incidental Amendments) Order 2017 (SI2017/422)	Covers the introduction of bereavement support payments

1 April 2018	The Fire and Rescue Authority (Police and Crime Commissioner) (Application of Local Policing Provisions, Inspection, Powers to Trade and Consequential Amendments) Order 2017 (SI2017/863)	Technical amend to disregard of earnings of fire-fighters
1 April 2018	The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2017 (SI2017/1305)	Uprating and alignment with minor changes in other schemes
2 April 2018	The Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 (Consequential Amendments to Secondary Legislation) Regulations 2018 (SI2018/48)	Amends definition of care homes in Wales
1 April 2019	The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2018 (SI2018/1346)	Uprating and alignment with minor changes in other schemes
29 April 2019	The Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 (Consequential Amendments to Secondary Legislation) Regulations 2019 (SI2019/237)	Updates cross reference re Welsh fostering arrangements.
1 April 2020	The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 (SI2020/23)	Uprating, disregard of additional charitable payments and alignment with minor changes in other schemes
1 April 2021	The Council Tax Reduction Schemes	Uprating, introduction of separate personal

	(Prescribed Requirements) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 (SI 2021/29)	allowance for those who reach pension age after 1 April 2021, changes to the Habitual Residence Test. Treatment of UC payments, child migrant trust, victims payments, Grenfell Tower and occasional assistance.
1 April 2022	The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2022	Uprating, disregard if additional types of payments and compensation & treatment of Afghan citizens,
1 April 2022	The Council Tax (Demand Notices and Reduction Schemes) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2022	Disregard of payments made under the Energy Rebate Scheme 2022
1 April 2023	Social Security and Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Amendment) Regulations 2022. SI 2022/449,	Citizens from EEA countries will be subject to the same eligibility requirements as those from non-EEA countries when applying for Council Tax Support.
1 April 2023	The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England)(Amendment)Regulations 2023	Technical changes to the regulations to include the Adult Disability Payment in various sections. This payment is disregarded as income. Inclusion of £350 thank you payments made to those who are “Homes for Ukraine” sponsors as an income that is disregarded as both capital and income. Those arriving from Ukraine in connection with the Russian invasion and other individuals granted leave to enter or remain in the UK outside the Immigration Rules, with recourse to public funds,

		will not need to demonstrate "habitual residence" in order to receive Council Tax Support.

Why Manchester City Council Should End Bailiff Use

Please see testimonies at the end of this document from people living in Manchester who have experienced the harsh realities of bailiffs being sent to their homes.

This report acknowledges the new guidelines for council tax recovery as part of its Anti-Poverty work adopted by the Executive on 28th June, following the report from the Head of Corporate Revenues, Charles Metcalfe. We welcome these positive measures and hope that they dramatically reduce the number of bailiff referrals made by the council and show a department willing to put the welfare of the city's residents at the core of policy making. We particularly welcome the acknowledgement that pushing residents into debt and poverty is a false economy for local authorities. ACORN are also working together with the council to review the wording/layout of letters.

1. Background

[£5.5 billion of council tax arrears have built up in England alone](#). The latest cost of living crisis hitting households at the same time as rising council tax ([4.99% in Manchester](#)) now risks a dramatic increase in the use of bailiffs to collect growing arrears.

We understand that Manchester City Council are under severe financial pressure after more than a decade of central government cuts and rising demand for services. We also recognise that local authorities have limited options when it comes to council tax collection. However, [there is no evidence that stricter enforcement measures, including bailiff use, lead to increased collection rates](#).

Bailiff action is a distressing experience that exacerbates the debt and poverty affecting people struggling to keep up with council tax payments. **Pushing residents into debt and poverty is also a false economy for local authorities.** As a result of bailiff enforcement, residents can become unable to make council tax contributions as well as seeking discretionary and housing support for years into the future.

Council tax income makes up a smaller proportion of Manchester City Council's overall revenue compared to other local authorities. [On average, local authorities receive half of their funding through council tax collection](#), for Manchester City Council that figure is [around 30%](#). This means that the local authority is less exposed to fluctuations in council tax collection rates.

In year collection rates for Manchester City Council were around 90% in 21-22, down from the pre-pandemic level of around 93% in 17-18 and 18-19. [Collection rates were higher in 20-21 than in 21-22, despite a pause in cases being referred to enforcement agencies](#).

Bailiffs make Manchester poorer. The fees incurred by a Manchester resident that has gone through the whole of the [enforcement process](#) could be more than £644.50. [Half of Citizens Advice clients](#)

[currently seeking debt advice have a negative budget, meaning their necessary expenditure on essentials outweighs their income. The average person they help with debt advice used to have £19 left over each month after paying for their essentials. Now, they have an average shortfall of £28 per month.](#)

It is therefore impossible for the average highly indebted person to pay back any council tax arrears safely, with court action just pushing them further into destitution and despair.

[In Manchester, people of working age with no 'excess income' are still required to pay 17.5% towards their council tax bill.](#) This is simply impossible and creates a conveyor belt of people being pushed into arrears. Whilst residents in receipt of maximum council tax support are exempt from bailiff action in Manchester, those on less than the maximum are not. Residents may also not be receiving the maximum support they are entitled.

Paying back council tax arrears debts often leads to agonising choices for people in debt about whether to prioritise repayments over heating or food, or whether to borrow from high-cost lenders or illegal loan sharks to survive. [The Trussell Trust recently reported that council tax debt pushes many people into destitution, leading them to food banks.](#)

2. A false economy

Over-indebtedness incurs considerable social and economic costs, many of which fall on local authorities. These severe financial pressures contribute to relationship breakdown, poor health – including mental health¹ – and loss of housing².

They can also harm debtors' employability³, reduce their productivity at work⁴, and affect the welfare of their children⁵. At its most severe, over-indebtedness can also be a contributory factor in suicide⁶.

In 2018 the National Audit Office estimated that⁷:

- Roughly one in every twelve over-indebted individuals will experience mental health problems such as anxiety or depression, with each of these creating a direct additional cost for health services of around £300 per year.

¹ Richardson, T, Elliott, P. Roberts, R. (2013). 'The Relationship Between Personal Unsecured Debt and Mental and Physical Health: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis'; Gathergood, J. (2012). 'Debt and Depression: Causal Links and Social Norm Effects'.

² Providing help to people debt problems is a common element of homelessness prevention strategies in many countries. See, for example, Gaetz, S. & DeJ, E. (2017), 'A New Direction: A Framework for Homelessness Prevention'. Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, Toronto.

³ Gibbons, D. (2010). 'Out of Work and Out of Money: A study of financial inclusion and worklessness in Manchester: how to improve support for people with money problems to obtain and sustain employment'. Manchester City Council.

⁴ Joo, S. & Garman, E.T. (1998), 'The potential effects of workplace financial education based on the relationship between personal financial wellness and worker job productivity'.

⁵ The Children's Society & StepChange (2014), 'The Debt Trap: exposing the impact of problem debt on children'.

⁶ See [Financial Times: Problem Debt and Suicide - Money and Mental Health](#)

⁷ See above.

- When factoring in additional costs arising from mental health problems caused by over-indebtedness, such as costs for social care services and knock-on impacts on employment, the amount rose to £11,100 per person per year.
- A further three percent of over-indebted individuals will also be more likely to move into, or remain in, state-subsidised housing, creating additional costs of £9,739 per year.

Using these costings and applying them to the 22,933 cases that were sent to enforcement agencies in 2021/2022 in Manchester we calculate the impact of council tax debt could have been £6.9 million in additional public service costs, this far outweighs the £3.7 million collected from residents who had not engaged with the Council between September 2018 and September 2019 (below).

	% of residents impacted	Number of residents impacted	Cost	Total costs
Additional Mental Health Crisis Support	0.08%	19	£300	£5,710
Additional Social Care/Employment Support	0.08%	19	£11,100	£211,282
Additional Housing Support	3%	688	£9,739	£6,700,335
Totals				£6,917,327
Enforcement Case Referrals 2021/2022	22,933			

3. On the “issue” of non-payment when people can afford to pay.

During this campaign, we have heard members sitting on the council executive as well as members of the governance and scrutiny committee make the claim that bailiffs make sure that people pay the debts. We have also heard arguments amounting to “if we do not have the threat of bailiffs in our back pockets, people will stop paying their council tax entirely”. We do not know where these claims come from as we have never seen any evidence to this effect. In fact, from speaking to members of the public as a part of our campaign, we found that over **50% of people did not know that the council passes on accounts to enforcement agents**. If the above claim were true, the council would expect most people to not pay their council tax. The general public understands, as we at Debt Justice and ACORN do, the importance of council tax to provide local services.

We have also spoken to debt advisors, who echo this. Tim Nelson, a member of Greater Manchester Money Advice Group said:

“I have been a debt adviser for about 22 years and I cannot recall any client who had the ability to pay but refused to do so. They do not pay because they are not given the opportunity to, a payment arrangement that means you cannot afford to eat is not an opportunity to pay.”

From the council's own data however, we have seen that enforcement agents are **only able to recuperate 14% of debts passed on in 2021/22 and 16% 2022/23**, showing that they are not an effective method of collecting debt in the first place.

4. New guidelines for council tax recovery

The council set out [new guidelines for council tax recovery in June 2023](#) to mitigate the impact of the cost-of-living crisis. This includes:

- Increasing support through the Discretionary Council Tax Payment scheme until at least March 2024.
- Giving residents in council tax arrears the ability to spread re-payments over two years, rather than one.
- Implementing a less formal local 'breathing space' scheme to give residents in arrears the ability to pause collection activity whilst they seek debt advice and local authority support to stabilise their finances.
- Reviewing the Council Tax Support scheme before 2024/5, which will consult on increasing the maximum amount of support available to residents from 82.5% of the bill. Best practice in preventing poverty and arrears is for local authorities to offer up to a 100% reduction.

We welcome these positive measures and hope that they dramatically reduce the number of bailiff referrals made by the council. We particularly welcome the acknowledgement that **pushing residents into debt and poverty is a false economy for local authorities**. The council's analysis of new guidelines states ["in some cases the payment plans may actually support a higher ultimate collection rate as well as providing support to residents."](#)

Despite this acknowledgment, the council continues to use bailiffs to collect council tax. Every referral to bailiffs is a social policy failure and we would encourage Manchester City Council to be bolder.

Bailiffs are financially incentivised to recover debts and are therefore badly placed to assess the vulnerability of residents. The code of practice does not give sufficient protection to residents because [poor enforcement practice is widespread. An estimated one in three bailiffs break the rules](#) - bailiffs enter people's homes (sometimes with children inside) before six am or after nine pm, seize possessions from the wrong people, use force to enter and intimidate, often causing trauma in the process.

The council has an opportunity to show ethical leadership and set an example to local authorities around the country by working with residents to find alternatives to using bailiffs to collect council tax arrears.

Recommendations

We encourage members of the committee to support the following recommendations at the meeting on 7th September:

- This committee acknowledges the difficulties faced by people with lived experience of debt across Manchester
- This committee acknowledges the work of Debt Justice and ACORN in supporting people from across Greater Manchester with lived experience of debt

- This committee recommends that the Council's Executive initiates a review into the best way to ethically support people experiencing council tax debt with methods that are financially inclusive and no longer include bailiffs as a way to recover debt to be presented within 6 months

For more information contact Richard Dunbar, richard@debtjustice.org.uk or 07712476128. About Debt Justice (Formerly Jubilee Debt Campaign): We are a campaigning organisation working with others to end unjust debt and the poverty and inequality it perpetuates, in the UK and across the world.

Or Louisa Olympios, louisa.olympios@acorntheunion.org.uk or 07759307360. About ACORN: Founded in Bristol in 2014, ACORN is a community based union of tenants, workers and residents. We are a mass membership organisation and network of low income people organising for a fairer deal for our communities fighting for good housing, good jobs, and good public services. Find out more - acorntheunion.org.uk

Testimonies from residents

Resident 1

“When I was in my early 20s I had a car, now I’m going to sound like my wife, I can’t remember what make it was, just that it was red, and I needed to top up the radiator every time I used it just to get from A to B.

I was living on my own after dropping out of uni, I didn’t have a job and was trying to figure out what and who I wanted to be. I found myself getting into some debt with a few bills, and I was unable to pay my council tax. I felt I didn’t have anyone to turn to, I didn’t know who could help me.

I couldn’t speak to my parents.

I’m from a small town in South Yorkshire, and they weren’t in a position to help me, and if I’m honest....I was embarrassed. I wanted them to be proud and see that I could go it alone, so instead I did what any other 20 something in my position would do, I ignored it!

I grew up in Thatcher’s Britain, I was 7 when she came to power and 18 when she left, what followed was more of the same. I remember the miners strike, privatisation, poll tax and cuts to public services across the board. Things were hard, I’m sure those who are old enough out there will remember, jobs were hard to find; I was no different. So, when I came home to find a handwritten note on my car saying bailiffs were coming to take the car, and things from my house unless I called them... I had no idea what my rights were. When 2 blokes came round and started sizing up my furniture, I had no idea that I could refuse to let them in, that I had rights, and people I could go to for help.

They asked me to prove I lived alone, as they went upstairs and started opening draws and wardrobes in my bedroom.

This encounter that happened 30 years ago with bailiffs impacted the way I handled.... handle money now, I have severe anxiety when dealing with bills, and for a long time found it impossible to face.”

Resident 2

“A few years ago I was visited by a bailiff. I asked “why are you here”. He said that I needed to pay £600. I asked what for and he said it was because I was late on my council tax payment by two days. He said the £600 was the payment for the rest of the year.

At the time I was operating a childminding business. I was not happy because the visit happened when other people’s children were on my premises. He had his camera on and I asked for it to be turned off because of the children. I then said this is not fair because I usually never miss a payment.

I asked what will happen if I refuse to pay?

The options were: they collect items from my house to sell or I would be arrested.

I said neither of those make sense. I said if you take things like my laptop and TV I will not be able to look after the children because these are resources to teach the children. Secondly if you arrest me I will get a criminal record and will be unable to work with children or get certain jobs so I wouldn't be able to pay my council tax then. He then rang the office to set up installment payments but they refused. I didn't know what to do.

I then rang my brother and he loaned me the money. I paid and he left. At the end of the month I had to pay my brother back therefore I had to live on £600 less."

Resident 3

"Two years ago, I found myself being unable to pay my council tax bill on time and missed a payment. I got a letter and paid for it when I could. The reality was, I just didn't have the money for it. I'm not eligible for any benefits, don't qualify for any support but the reality is that I am living month to month. On this specific month, I had got an electricity bill that was surprisingly high and the kids were going back to school. I needed to make the hard decision on what to prioritise and decided that the kids needed their uniforms.

I contacted the council and restructured my payments and had them go from paying over 10 months to a 12 month payment option. A few months later, I was unable to pay my council tax on time again. I didn't plan to not pay it, I just didn't have the money available. I thought I would be able to catch it up later when I did have the money. The council took my case to court and I wasn't informed. I only found out when the next yearly bill came in informing me that my account had been passed on.

This is when the bailiffs came out. It was really frightening. They put chains around the car and added on charges on top of what I owed. It's made things more difficult. They told me I couldn't set up a payment plan and had to pay straight away. I didn't have the money so had to put it on my credit card. I had to pay off my debt by taking on more debt.

When I was dealing with it and reaching out it felt like what I was told over the phone wasn't what was actually happening. I only got one letter reminder the first time. It was very shocking, I needed a bit of space, some better support and more understanding. I'd like to see the council treating people with more kindness. I would have paid it the next month. If my electric company were able to support me, why can't the council?"

Resident 4

"6 years ago, I was in a houseshare with two other people. I set up a direct debit and paid my part of the bill, I was also getting Council Tax support to pay the bill because I was claiming PIP. I didn't know this but the other two were not paying their share.

The council had been trying to find them for years but couldn't so now I've been made liable for the whole bill. Because I'm the only one they can get in contact with, I'm having to pay. Whilst I was trying to speak to the council and argue against being charged this bill as I had paid my portion, my case was sent over to the bailiffs. The bill went from £273 initially and I'm now being charged over £600. My

account has been passed on to debt collectors to make it bigger and now it's being taken out of my earnings. I'm in temporary accommodation at the moment, with someone else's bill being taken out of my Universal Credit. I've been using food banks. I really tried my best to deal with this, a bill that I had tried to keep on top of. I just feel that the council should be taking into consideration people who are trying.

The bailiffs were absolutely useless and I can't believe how much they added on. At the end they had to pass my case back to the council because I was in temporary accommodation with other people who are vulnerable, but the extra charges haven't been taken off and I'm still paying them."

Resident 5

"I fell into arrears with my council tax at my previous address years ago when I was diagnosed with cancer and we had a family crisis. I got in contact with the council after I moved, a few years later, trying to make a repayment plan and get back on top of my finances. Instead of agreeing to a payment plan that I can afford, the money is being taken out of my salary every month.

I've been using foodbanks because the payments are so high, they also aren't consistent month to month and I'm never able to budget for the month. I don't know what I'll be left with once the council tax payments are taken from my wage. I've never been given a breakdown of the full amount I owe and every time I've tried to get a payment plan that I can afford, I've been told that isn't possible.

It's all got so much that I find it hard to open letters about bills, find it hard to talk to someone over the phone about this because it causes me so much stress and anxiety but have been told that I can't resolve this over email. I've tried to explain how hard I find it to speak to someone over the phone but keep getting told this means I'm not engaging with the council. The stress from this has got so much that I have considered ending it all before. I've had to take leave from work and the payments are still coming out of my statutory sick pay. It's been really difficult to live with and I've been having to rely on the "Bread and Butter Thing" to get food and it's meant that I've had to set up a payment plan to pay back my supported accommodation, because I'm now in arrears with my housing."

Further References

- Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities. (2023). Statistical release Local Government Finance. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1108764/Collection_rates_for_Council_Tax_and_non-domestic_rates_in_England_2021_to_2022_revised_.pdf
- Derricourt, R., Lane, J., Mcdonagh, E., & Thorne, M. (2019). The Costs of Collection The high price of council tax debt collection. https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/Global/CitizensAdvice/Debt%20and%20Money%20Publications/FINAL_%20Costs%20of%20Collection%20.pdf
- Manchester City Council, Council Tax Data, https://www.manchester.gov.uk/info/200028/council_tax/6722/council_tax_data
- Manchester City Council, Annual Statement of Accounts, https://www.manchester.gov.uk/info/200110/budgets_and_spending/864/annual_statement_of_accounts
- Manchester City Council, Revenues and Benefits Unit, Debt recovery Policy 2021-22 https://www.manchester.gov.uk/downloads/download/5245/council_tax_debt_recovery_policy
- Money & Mental Health Institute. (2017, April 11). The mental health case for bailiff reform (blog) - The Money and Mental Health Policy Institute. Money and Mental Health Policy Institute. <https://www.moneyandmentalhealth.org/bailiff-mental-health/>
- Hammersmith & Fulham. (2019, May 17). Efficiency through fairness: we've improved council tax collections, without using bailiffs. LBHF. <https://www.lbhf.gov.uk/articles/news/2019/05/efficiency-through-fairness-we-ve-improved-council-tax-collections-without-using-bailiffs>
- Citizens Advice. (2020, June). Charities call for council tax reform ahead of August debt D-Day. www.citizensadvice.org.uk. <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/about-us1/media/press-releases/charities-call-for-council-tax-reform-ahead-of-august-debt-d-day/>
- Citizens Advice. (2021, January). Unavoidable debt: Coronavirus council tax debt. www.citizensadvice.org.uk. <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/cymraeg/amdanom-ni/our-work/policy/policy-research-topics/debt-and-money-policy-research/unavoidable-debt-coronavirus-council-tax-debt/>
- Howarth, P. (2021, January 27). A new approach to the collection of council tax in London. Policy in Practice. <https://policyinpractice.co.uk/a-new-approach-to-the-collection-of-council-tax-in-london/>
- Jubilee Debt Campaign. (2021, March). A Fresh Start After Covid-19: An outline strategy to tackle Britain's household debt crisis. <https://jubileedebt.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/A-Fresh-Start-After-Covid19-web.pdf>
- Trussell Trust. (2022, February 22). Four things that we learnt from working alongside people with experience of being in debt to government – and how to fix the system. The Trussell Trust. <https://www.trusselltrust.org/2022/02/22/four-things-that-we-learnt-from-working-alongside-people-with-experience-of-being-in-debt-to-government-and-how-to-fix-the-system/>

This page is intentionally left blank

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee – 7 September 2023

Subject: Briefing on Automation & Artificial Intelligence

Report of: Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer

Summary

There has been a huge amount of coverage of Artificial Intelligence (AI), and tools such as ChatGPT, in the press and from suppliers in the recent months and it was thought helpful to establish the Councils current position, plans and to define what the different terminologies are that often get grouped into this.

AI is a fast-emerging area of technology development, hype, and long-established solid technologies. Section 1 provides an introduction for this report written by ChatGPT.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- (1) Consider the content of this report and comment on the content which are relevant to the remit of this scrutiny committee.
-

Wards Affected: All

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

None directly arising from this report

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - the impact of the issues addressed in this report in meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty and broader equality commitments

Artificial Intelligence or AI is a significant technological advancement that the Council needs to understand to see how it can support the delivery of our Public Sector Equality Duty and broader equality commitments.

Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS/Contribution to the Strategy
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	Artificial Intelligence or AI is a significant technological advancement that the Council needs to understand to see how it can support the delivery of Our Manchester Strategy and Corporate Plan Objectives
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	

Financial Consequences – Revenue

None directly arising from this report.

Financial Consequences – Capital

None directly arising from this report.

Contact Officers:

Name: Carol Culley
Position: Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer
Telephone: 0161 234 3406
E-mail: carol.culley@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Chris Wanley
Position: Director of ICT
Telephone: 0161 234 3087
E-mail: Chris.Wanley@manchester.gov.uk

Background documents (available for public inspection):

None

1. AI Generated RAGOS Report

Briefing on Automation & Artificial Intelligence

In an era driven by technological advancements, Manchester City Council faces both opportunities and challenges in embracing Artificial Intelligence (AI), integration, and automation to enhance its resources and governance processes. This paper provides a comprehensive understanding of AI, integration, and automation, explores their potential benefits for the Council, and proposes a set of safeguards to ensure their secure and ethical implementation.

1. Introduction:

As Manchester continues to evolve as a vibrant urban centre, the effective utilization of technological innovations becomes paramount. AI, integration, and automation present promising avenues to optimize resource allocation and enhance governance. However, their implementation requires a strategic approach that prioritizes security, ethics, and accountability.

2. Understanding AI, Integration, and Automation:

- **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** refers to the simulation of human intelligence in machines that can perform tasks requiring human cognitive functions such as learning, reasoning, problem-solving, and decision-making.
- **Integration** entails combining different systems or applications to function seamlessly as a unified whole, enabling data flow and process optimization.
- **Automation** involves the use of technology to perform tasks with minimal human intervention, thereby improving efficiency and reducing manual workload.

3. Potential Benefits for Manchester City Council:

- **Enhanced Decision-Making:** AI-driven analytics can provide data-driven insights, aiding informed decision-making for resource allocation and policy formulation.
- **Efficient Service Delivery:** Integration of systems can streamline services, enabling citizens to interact seamlessly with the Council, reducing response times and enhancing user satisfaction.
- **Cost Savings:** Automation of routine tasks can lead to resource optimization and cost savings, enabling the Council to allocate resources strategically.

4. Safeguarding Measures: To ensure the safe and responsible adoption of AI, integration, and automation, the following safeguards are recommended:

a. Data Privacy and Security:

- Implement robust data protection measures to safeguard citizens' personal information and maintain compliance with data protection regulations.
- Conduct regular security audits to identify vulnerabilities and address potential threats to data integrity.

b. Ethical AI:

- Establish clear guidelines for AI usage to prevent biased decision-making and ensure fairness, transparency, and accountability in AI-driven processes.
- Continuously monitor AI systems to detect and address any unintended discriminatory outcomes.

c. Stakeholder Engagement:

- Involve citizens, community representatives, and experts in the decision-making process to ensure technology adoption aligns with community needs and values.
- Foster transparency by providing clear communication about the adoption of AI, integration, and automation.

d. Skill Development:

- Invest in training and upskilling programs to equip Council employees with the necessary skills to effectively operate and manage new technologies.
- Promote a culture of continuous learning to keep up with evolving technological trends.

e. Redundancy and Fail-Safe Mechanisms:

- Implement fail-safe mechanisms and redundancy plans to mitigate the impact of system failures and ensure continuous service delivery.
- Develop contingency plans to revert to manual processes when necessary.

f. Regulatory Compliance:

- Stay updated with relevant laws and regulations pertaining to AI, data usage, and automation to ensure adherence to legal requirements.
- Collaborate with regulatory bodies to obtain necessary approvals and certifications.

5. Conclusion:

Manchester City Council stands at the precipice of technological transformation through AI, integration, and automation. By embracing these technologies with a focus on security, ethics, and accountability, the Council can enhance its resource allocation, governance processes, and citizen engagement, thereby contributing to a more efficient and responsive administration for the city's residents.

2. Introduction and Purpose

- 2.1. This report is to set out what Automation means for the Council as there are many different technologies associated with Automation, one of which is Artificial Intelligence.
- 2.2. Artificial Intelligence or AI is a significant technological advancement that the Council needs to understand to see how it can support the delivery Our Manchester Strategy and Corporate Plan objectives. The Internal Digital Strategy and the external Doing Digital Together strategy, set out an ambitious change agenda to make the Council easier for residents and organisations to interact with and to improve internal processes and ways of

working. A key aim is to harness the power of data and intelligence to inform decision making and how the Council operates.

- 2.3. To respond to changing demands and financial pressures there is a need to reform and release capacity away from repetitive tasks and data manipulating to areas of work that can really add value. This report sets out what AI is, the potential ways it can be used and the associated risks.

3. What is Automation?

- 3.1. Automation is a broad term that encompasses many different technologies that can be used for different purposes, all with a common aim to undertake tasks or processes in an automated way.

- 3.2. The benefits of automation for an organisation are significant and includes:

- **Increased Efficiency:** Automation streamlines repetitive tasks, reducing the need for manual intervention. This leads to faster and more consistent processes, allowing organisations to handle larger workloads efficiently.
- **Cost Savings:** By automating tasks, organisations can save money primarily by reducing errors which minimises the costs associated with rework and corrections.
- **Enhanced Accuracy:** Automation minimises human errors and ensures consistent performance, leading to improved data accuracy and higher quality outputs.
- **Scalability:** Automated processes can be easily scaled up or down to meet changing demands without significant overhead costs, making it easier for organisations to adapt to growth or fluctuations in operations.
- **Improved Compliance:** Automation helps ensure regulatory compliance by enforcing standardised processes and reducing the risk of non-compliance due to human errors.
- **Faster Processing:** Automated workflows can handle tasks at a much faster pace than manual processes, resulting in reduced turnaround times and faster service delivery to customers.
- **24/7 Operations:** With automation, certain tasks can be performed round-the-clock without human intervention, enabling continuous operations.
- **Data Insights:** Automation tools often generate valuable data and analytics, offering organisation insights into performance, customer behaviour, and process efficiency, which can inform decision-making and process optimisation.
- **Employee Empowerment:** Automation allows employees to focus on more strategic and creative tasks rather than repetitive, mundane activities, leading to increased job satisfaction and productivity.

4. Types of Automation

- 4.1. There are many different types of automation that use different technology tools to perform tasks. The tools range from simply using workflows within business applications instead of manual processes, to the use of Robotic Process Automation (RPA) where software bots automate tasks and

processes, all the way through to use of AI. A comprehensive list of the types of Automation is detailed in Appendix 1.

5. What is Artificial Intelligence (AI)?

- 5.1. AI can take many forms. As such, there is no agreed single definition of what it encompasses. In broad terms, it can be regarded as the theory and development of computer systems able to perform tasks normally requiring human intelligence, such as visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making, and translation between languages. This includes:
- extracting information from pictures (computer vision)
 - transcribing or understanding spoken words (speech to text and natural language processing)
 - pulling insights and patterns out of written text (natural language understanding)
 - speaking what has been written (text to speech, natural language processing)
 - autonomously moving through spaces based on its senses (robotics)
 - generally looking for patterns in large amounts of data (machine learning)
- 5.2. AI is rapidly transforming the way in which we live and work. For example, in the NHS AI is being used to benefit people by analysing X-ray images to support radiologists in making assessments and helping clinicians read brain scans more quickly. AI is used to support people in ‘virtual wards’ by remotely monitoring technology such as apps and medical devices that assess patients’ health and care whilst at home.
- 5.3. A Council used AI technology for the ‘Ask Teddi’ project to co-produce a free, accessible interactive app to support the health, wellbeing and development of families with a child aged 0-5. Collaborating with healthcare experts, users and technologists the app was built to support on infant feeding, immunisations, sleep, play and socialisation, mental wellbeing, food, activity and oral health. Using AI, the app tailors information to individual needs, offering parents and carers a responsive toolkit of expert and evidence-based advice as well as giving them access to reliable resources and information 24/7. Evaluation observed that parents and professionals found the app to be a valuable tool which was accessible, interactive, and provided an additional layer of localised support. The app was understood to have helped increase knowledge, confidence and positive behaviours in key areas. Overall half of participants were also from Black, Asian and other minority ethnic groups in the UK, this is a positive finding which suggests that the app is accessible and inclusive across demographic groups. The next steps for the project include maintaining and updating the advice and information held within the app.
- 5.4. AI systems rely upon large datasets from which they can decipher patterns and correlations, that enables the system to ‘learn’ how to anticipate future events. It does this by relying upon and/or creating algorithms based on the dataset which it can use to interpret new data. This data can be structured,

such as bank transactions, or unstructured, such as enabling a driverless car to respond to the environment around it.

- 5.5. There are also skills required to use these tools, some rely on structured language where you must be very specific in your query, such as ChatGPT, or others require much more technical skills where you are creating integration between systems.
- 5.6. The different forms that AI can take range from so-called ‘narrow’ AI designed to perform specific tasks to what is known as ‘strong’ or ‘general’ AI with the capacity to learn and reason. The range of AI includes:
 - Narrow AI is designed to perform a specific task (such as speech recognition), using information from specific datasets and cannot adapt to perform another task. These are often tools that aim to assist, rather than replace, the work of humans.
 - Machine learning is a method that can be used to achieve narrow AI; it allows a system to learn and improve from examples, without all its instructions being explicitly programmed. It does this by finding patterns in large amounts of data, which it can then use to make predictions (for example what film or TV programme you might like to watch next on a streaming platform). The AI can then independently amend its algorithm based on the accuracy of its predictions.
 - Deep learning is a type of machine learning whose design has been informed by the structure and function of the human brain and the way it transmits information e.g., ChatGPT has been fine-tuned to allow users to ask it a question, or make a request, and for it to generate “human-like text” in response.
 - Artificial general intelligence (AGI) is an AI system that can undertake any intellectual task/problem that a human can. AGI is a system that can reason, analyse and achieve a level of understanding that is on a par with humans; something that has yet to be achieved by AI.

6. Opportunities and Risks from Ongoing development of AI

- 6.1. As noted by the UK government in its ‘National AI strategy’, AI is the fastest growing deep technology in the world, with “huge potential to rewrite the rules of entire industries, drive substantial economic growth and transform all areas of life”. Such transformative technology brings both risks and benefits, as explored below.
- 6.2. Section 5 of this report details some specific benefits of Automation and AI for the Council. The potential benefits of AI at a societal level are as follows:
 - AI used in public services can reduce costs and offer new possibilities in public transport, education, energy and waste management and could also improve the sustainability of products.
 - Democracy could be made stronger by using data-based scrutiny, preventing disinformation and cyber-attacks and ensuring access to quality information.

- AI could help people with improved health care, safer cars, and other transport systems, tailored, cheaper and longer-lasting products and services. It can also facilitate access to information, education, and training.
- AI can also make workplace safer as robots can be used for dangerous parts of jobs, and open new job positions as AI-driven industries grow and change.
- For organisations, AI can enable the development of a new generation of products and services, and it can boost sales, improve machine maintenance, increase production output and quality, improve customer service, as well as save energy.
- AI is predicted to be used more in crime prevention and the criminal justice system, as massive datasets could be processed faster, prisoner flight risks assessed more accurately, crime or even terrorist attacks predicted and prevented. In military matters, AI could be used for defence and attack strategies in hacking and phishing or to target key systems in cyberwarfare.

6.3. However, the risks of AI include:

- A lack of transparency, particularly regarding the development of deep learning models (including the so-called "Black Box" issue where AI generates unexpected outputs and human scientists and developers are not clear why it has done so).
- Bias and discrimination, particularly where AI systems inadvertently perpetuate or amplify societal bias. Manchester is one of most diverse cities in terms of ethnicity and language and we would want to guard against any inherent bias – risk is that if we were to use AI in service design, those biases would be perpetuated.
- Privacy concerns, particularly given the capacity of AI to analyse large amounts of personal data.
- Tools such as ChatGPT and Google Bard have sometimes been found to have an issue with "hallucinating" inaccurate information and providing it in response to a user prompt. It is important to note that the quality of the outputs of such models is intrinsically related to the quality of the data used to train them.
- Ethical concerns, especially concerning the challenges inherent to instilling moral and ethical values in AI systems.
- Security risks associated with inadvertently using MCC data.
- Concentration of power, given the risk of AI development being dominated by a small number of corporations.
- Dependence on AI, including the risk that an overreliance on AI leads to a loss of creativity, critical thinking skills and human intuition.
- Job displacement, the potential for AI to abolish the need for some jobs (whilst potentially generating the need for others).
- Economic inequality, and the risk that AI will disproportionately benefit wealthy individuals and corporations.
- Legal and regulatory challenges, and the need for regulation to keep pace with the rapid development of innovation.

- Loss of human connection, and the fear that a reliance on AI-driven communication and interactions could lead to diminished empathy, social skills and human connections.
- Misinformation and manipulation, and the risk that AI-generated content drives the spread of false information and the manipulation of public opinion.
- Unintended consequences, particularly around the complexity of AI systems and a lack of human oversight leading to undesirable outcomes.
- Existential risks, including the rise of artificial general intelligence (AGI) that surpasses human intelligence and raises long term risks for the future of humanity.

6.4. A number of these risks can be addressed by rigorous organisational governance and by using tools that are designed to work in large organisations and the data and intellectual property remains with the organisation.

7. The Council's Position on Automation and AI

- 7.1. The Council are embracing the use of technology and AI and this will be a consideration in all parts of the Future Shape change programme. However, it is important that this is done in a way that ensures the work that adds value and that this is done safely. Learning from the Cabinet Office and those of the National Cyber team is being actively used to ensure that approaches are innovative and robust.
- 7.2. There are also implications for the skills required by our workforce. AI will have a role to play in automating data sharing between systems reducing the reliance on the digital skills of a form user. The digital inclusion part of Future Shape will be key to supporting our workforce to use and maximise the benefits of the new technologies.
- 7.3. However, to expand the use and embrace the benefits and use of Automation including AI to improve service delivery and to achieve the Council's objectives, it must be managed in a safe way to avoid the associated risks.
- 7.4. There are questions over how personal data is used, stored and managed. To ensure we remain compliant from a data-governance perspective, we have recently communicated council-wide that you must not use your Council corporate email address to sign up/log in to AI tools like ChatGPT or attempt to bypass this for any work-related purposes.
- 7.5. We are actively pursuing the implementation of technical 'guard rails' to ensure that any development of automation using the free Microsoft 365 tools available can be done in a secure way to safeguard systems and data.
- 7.6. We are also in the process of developing policy and guidance for the use of AI in the workplace and this will be progressed through Corporate Information Assurance and Risk Group (CIARG) in the first instance in November 23 to address considerations around data security and standards.

- 7.7. Any new projects are subject to the ICT & Digital demand process that were received by this committee in 2022, and AI considerations will form part of this process. Whilst there is no wish to discourage innovation it does need to be carefully managed. All projects involving personal data go through the usual information governance processes before being approved and commissioned. This rigorous organisational governance means that we can ensure we address the risks of AI whilst ensuring new initiatives align with Council objectives.
- 7.8. This governance also supports the Three-way Push by holding the work to account in line with Our Manchester which means we can, keep the basics on track, prevent problems down the line and tackle complex problems together. At a high-level AI and automation has a demonstrable part to play in this in that there are applications to be explored for its adoption in improving and sustaining good universal services, then using the collected data from them to analyse and predict trends to enable continual improvement and inform the resolution of complex problems across the Council.

8. Future Ambition

- 8.1. The use of Automation is being adopted in many ways, including the introduction of systems and workflow to replace manual operational processes. Through the Future Shape programme, there have been two RPA pilots to test the implementation and operational effectiveness of bots to automate processes. The detail of the learnings and findings of those pilots will be sought over the next few months, but indications so far are that the organisation has positively learnt from the experience, and it will be a priority to build on this learning.
- 8.2. A new platform has been introduced that will automate the integration and pass data between systems that is integral to the success of the RBDxP programme and the new FI&HRODT system as well as other line of business systems that need to integrate and pass data to other systems. Alongside this ICT will be introducing new low code development capability to quickly develop small systems and automate key manual processes across the Council.
- 8.3. The external Doing Digital Together strategy adopts the Smart City concept. AI has an important role to play in helping us monitor and measure the impact of changes in our city and, along with the Digital Strategy Team we will be strengthening our engagement with residents. This will also mean being much more transparent with our data to build trust and understanding on where and why AI is being used. The Digital Strategy Team are already engaging with CDEI (Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation) who are looking for industry partners to pilot incorporating an Algorithmic Impact Assessment (AIA) process, which offers a set of standards that would be used by those looking at AI systems in their work. The Manchester City Council-led Anti-Poverty Strategy has been identified as a potential case study.

- 8.4. The Digital Strategy team will also continue to work across key sectors, to share good models of practise, to keep internal colleagues up to pace with new technologies and research opportunities.
- 8.5. The Future Shape of the Council Programme will explore the use of AI and how it can support the delivery of its activities. An update on the work of Future Shape will be coming back to Resources and Governance Scrutiny committee. The example below shows how this work is already being used in the Resident and Business Digital Experience Workstream:

Automation of standard processes

As our new CRM platform is rolled out (via Resident and Business Digital Experience Programme, RBDxP), not only will our forms be better designed and accessible, but users will only be asked for the relevant information that they need to provide, and not for information that is not already accessible from another integrated system.

This will allow some operational tasks that have processes with a lot of manual stages to be automated, such as sending out for multiple requests or checking that photographs meet required criteria. This in turn removes staff intensive work and improves the experience for our residents when interacting with the Council.

- 8.6. AI is a very useful tool for assisting with research and policy formation, and as this doesn't involve the processing of personal data, officers engaged in this work have found it very useful to support the undertaking of their work in such areas as:
- Generating and refining ideas
 - Developing content including text and images
 - Analysing non-personal or non-sensitive data
- 8.7. Certain systems used by the Council do have in built AI capabilities supplied by the vendor as part of the service, for example, Microsoft 365. A number of our upcoming systems implementation will or are likely to have elements of automation, integration and workflow. Using the RBDxP principles, we know that the digital offer for those that can access it means a better and faster service, and it also allows us to develop better systems for those that need other forms of access too. How these functions are enhanced and safely implemented will be an area of focus in the delivery of the ICT Digital Strategy.
- 9. Next Steps**
- Specific guidance will be produced for officers on the use of AI technologies that will be approved by CIARG (November 2023).
 - The ICT and Digital Design Authority will review all new ICT & Digital Business Cases for any investment in new and emerging technologies ensuring risks can be addressed by rigorous organisational governance to

ensure AI technology isn't inadvertently introduced through the introduction of new systems. (Ongoing).

- Member sessions on examples of the technology being arranged for the Autumn by the Director of ICT
- Establish a group with other GM Local Authorities and others to work collaboratively on the roll out of new technologies (October 2023)
- Digital Strategy Team to work with networks such as Connected Places Catapult, Eurocities Digital Forum, Smart Cities UK Council and TechUK to look for best practise, both nationally and internationally.

This page is intentionally left blank

Appendix 1 – Different types of Automation

- Robotic Process Automation (RPA):
 - Software bots
 - Task automation
 - Process optimisation
- Business Process Automation (BPA):
 - Workflow automation
 - Rule-based automation
 - Integration of various software systems
- Artificial Intelligence (AI) Automation:
 - Cognitive automation
 - AI-powered decision-making
 - Automation of complex tasks using AI algorithms
- Cognitive Process Automation (CPA):
 - Integration of AI, ML, and NLP for cognitive tasks
 - Advanced data analysis and pattern recognition
- Intelligent Document Recognition (IDR):
 - Automated data extraction from unstructured documents
 - OCR (Optical Character Recognition) and data validation
- Test Automation:
 - Automated testing of software applications
 - Regression testing and continuous integration
- Network Automation:
 - Automated configuration and management of network devices
 - SDN (Software-Defined Networking) and NFV (Network Functions Virtualization)
- Chatbots and Virtual Assistants:
 - Automated customer support and interaction
 - Natural language understanding and responses
- Autonomous Vehicles:
 - Self-driving cars and drones
 - Automation in transportation and logistics
- Smart Home/Building Automation:
 - Home devices and appliances connected to a centralised system
 - Remote control and intelligent scheduling
- Industrial Automation:
 - PLC (Programmable Logic Controller) systems
 - Robotics and robotic arms for manufacturing
- Process Mining:
 - Automated analysis of process data and event logs
 - Identifying bottlenecks and process improvements
- Sales and Marketing Automation:
 - Automated email marketing campaigns
 - Lead generation and customer relationship management
- Supply Chain Automation:
 - Inventory management and order processing
 - Demand forecasting and logistics optimization
- Energy Management Automation:

- Automated control and monitoring of energy consumption
 - Smart grid technologies
- Health Care Automation:
 - Automated patient monitoring and data analysis
 - Robotic surgery and telemedicine applications

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee – 7 September 2023

Subject: Resident and Business Digital Experience Programme (RBDxP) Progress Update

Report of: Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer

Summary

This report provides an update on the Resident and Business Digital Experience Programme (RBDxP), the Programme's approach to user engagement and progress made in the procurement of new technology to replace the Council's existing Customer Relationship Management (CRM) System, eForms and integration technology.

The report also provides an update on the ongoing improvements that the Revenues and Benefits service are introducing to improve how the Council interacts with Residents and Businesses which compliments the RBDxP.

A previous report was brought to Committee in October 2022 providing an update on the RBDxP.

Recommendations

The Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee are requested to consider and comment on the content of this report, progress made to date and support the outlined next steps with this important Programme.

Wards Affected: All

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

The Future Shape of the Council aims to improve the Council's efficiency and effectiveness in the context of reducing our carbon impact including in areas such as estates, printing, and travel. The successful delivery of the digital and ICT approach will be integral to this.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - the impact of the issues addressed in this report in meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty and broader equality commitments

The Programme will be focusing the digital services around the users' needs and developing a user centred design approach, also incorporating inclusive design across the journey.

User engagement and feedback from residents and users has informed our requirements and will be used as the Programme progress to ensure that we build easy to use digital services for those who can and want to use them.

The Programme Team have developed an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) and work closely with the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team and Digital Inclusion Team who have been supporting and advising the Programme from the outset.

By engaging with different groups and also following government standard accessibility guidelines and incorporating inclusive design throughout the processes the Programme will improve the experience for all our Residents and Businesses.

Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS/Contribution to the Strategy
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	The Future Shape of the Council Programme is designed to strengthen the delivery of the priorities in Council's Corporate Plan, and as a result, all the Our Manchester Strategy outcomes. Some of the workstreams will also have a more direct impact as outlined below.
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	The Council is providing an opportunity for roles within the Programme Team on development and degree apprenticeship opportunities.
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	Social Value commitments of the contracts include providing digital literacy sessions to local communities and offers of technology.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	The Programme will introduce new up to date cloud-based technologies which will provide an integration with line of business systems. These integrations will reduce the reliance on paper and printing where possible and support the reduction in carbon emissions.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	The Council adopting technology and delivering digitally makes a positive contribution to Manchester's ambition to be a leading and inclusive Digital City.

Full details are in the body of the report, along with any implications for:

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Risk Management
- Legal Considerations

Financial Consequences – Revenue

The annual subscription costs for the CRM and integration application are c£206k and c£109k respectively.

The first three years of the CRM system will be funded from the Programme capital budget. Thereafter the ongoing annual subscription costs will be funded from the Council's ICT revenue budget.

The first year annual subscription costs for the integration application will be funded from the Programme capital budget. Thereafter the ongoing annual subscription costs will be funded from the Council's ICT revenue budget.

Financial Consequences – Capital

The implementation costs for the CRM and integration application are c£795k. These costs are being funded from the Programme capital budget.

Contact Officers:

Name: Carol Culley
Position: Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer
Telephone: 0161 234 3406
E-mail: carol.culley@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Lee Owen
Position: Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services
Telephone: 0161 245 7525
E-mail: lee.owen@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Jon Burt
Position: Head of Enterprise Architecture
Telephone: 07971 620993
E-mail: Jon.Burt@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Alexander Forbes
Position: RBDxP Programme Manager
Telephone: 0161 234 1820
E-mail: Alexander.Forbes@manchester.gov.uk

Background documents (available for public inspection): None

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Resident and Business Digital Experience Programme forms part of the transformation of how we work as a Council, driven by digitising and streamlining how we work in the Corporate Core. The Resident and Business Digital Experience Programme (RBDxP) is a key part of this and has been set up to make the Council much easier to engage with for residents, businesses and Councillors reporting and tracking their casework. The appended user persona's exemplify how those improvements will be felt.
- 1.2 As part of RBDxP we will replace the Council's existing customer relationship management system (CRM), it's interface with line of business systems, content management system (website) and eForms package in one integrated Digital Platform so that Council front-facing systems interact to the benefit of our residents and businesses.
- 1.3 The Programme last appeared before the Scrutiny Committee in October 2022. This report will provide an update on progress made across the Programme since then including how the Programme has continued to engage with service areas across the Council, residents, businesses and Members to ensure the new systems are designed to meet the needs and expectations of users.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 In October 2022 the Programme provided an update on progress of the Programme and plans for resident and business engagement.
- 2.2 The report also provided information on the open tender process that took place to select new technologies which will replace the Council's CRM, Content Management System (CMS) and integration technology in a single digital platform. This report provides an update on the changes made to the Programme and subsequent work since that report.

3.0 Update on Resident and Business Engagement

- 3.1 The Programme has continued to progress extensive engage with service areas across the Council, residents, businesses and Members. Service engagement activities have focussed on understanding service areas requirements which will inform the design of the Council's new CRM system, eForms and email notifications.
- 3.2 Robust and detailed user research is a key objective of RBDxP to ensure that Council services are data driven, accessible for all and are designed to meet the needs and expectations of residents, businesses, and Members. Since the Programme commenced, significant Resident and Business user engagement has taken place across the City as well as specific engagement with Members through lunch time and evening Member engagement sessions. The RBDxP team have been working with Neighbourhood teams and the Equalities,

Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Team to identify channels and community groups to engage with.

- 3.3 To date, the Programme have carried out:
- Online surveys ‘Improving manchester.gov.uk’ for residents and businesses, to capture website feedback and equalities data;
 - Website feedback sessions in the Town Hall Extension and local libraries (Manchester Central, Longsight, Gorton Hub).
 - In-person workshops in the City Centre and Wythenshawe, alongside an online workshops for those who preferred this channel;
 - Attended digital inclusion events in Harpurhey and Clayton to speak to residents to understand the challenges they face when interacting online;
 - Presented at business and resident forum events in Chorlton, Moss Side, Clayton, Piccadilly and the Northern Quarter to gather feedback;
 - Held Policy Panel Sessions with Members.
- 3.4 More than 100 residents have so far signed up to the Resident User Group which the Programme will engage with further as part of the Development and Testing phases of the Programme to ensure that our digital services are aligned to the needs of users.
- 3.5 As the Programme progresses, we will continue to work with colleagues in the EDI team and we will continue to engage with residents, businesses and Members throughout the lifecycle of the Programme.
- 3.6 The next phase of user engagement will focus on underrepresented communities to ensure that we meet the needs of all our residents. The RBDxP team will be working with colleagues across the Council and external organisations to identify and understand the most effective way to communicate with Manchester’s diverse communities including Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups, disability groups and trans inclusivity.
- 3.7 Once the new digital platform is available the Programme Team will engage with the Resident User Group to ensure that user needs are developed our digital services are aligned to the needs of users.
- 3.8 Feedback from this user research has also provided the data and insight for the RBDxP team to develop a detailed set of User Personas (Appendix 1). These will be used to understand the needs and challenges residents and businesses face when interacting with the Council and will be used as part of user testing in the future. The developed personas have been shared with colleagues in the Communications team and ratified by the RBDxP Project Board. New user personas will be developed if any gaps are identified as the Programme progresses.

4.0 Update on Procurement approach of the new Digital Platform

- 4.1.1 In 2022 the Programme undertook an open tender procurement process to select a single digital platform to replace the Council’s existing CRM system,

website, webforms and integration technology which interfaces these systems with line of business systems.

- 4.1.2 During detailed discussions at the contract award stage of the procurement it became apparent that the tender submission did not meet the Council's requirements. As a result of this the decision was made to withdraw the tender and to review the Programme's approach to procuring the new technology.
- 4.1.3 As a result the procurement was divided into the CRM system and webforms and the integration technology that links the CRM to line of business systems such as Biffa our waste management system. This will be followed by replacing and improving the Council's Content Management System (website).

4.2 Procurement

- 4.2.1 A series of demonstrations with CRM suppliers took place. The suppliers were based on recommendations made by Gartner and our Digital Transformation Consultancy Partner, Methods and were validated by the Council's Head of Enterprise Architecture.
- 4.2.2 The suppliers were asked to demonstrate the suitability of their product against a number of critical requirements to a panel of Service representatives. This process helped us to better understand the suppliers in the market and understand what capabilities our future CRM solution needed to include. The Programme followed a Crown Commercial Services G-Cloud 13 procurement route to accelerate the procurement timescales.
- 4.2.3 Following consideration of all responses from each supplier a recommendation to award the contract to Verint was approved by the RBDxP board for the replacement CRM system. The contract has now been finalised and start up activities commenced in August 2023.

4.3 Integration Technology

- 4.3.1 Two further contracts have been awarded to implement the Council's new integration technology that will connect the new CRM system with line of business systems to provide a seamless interface across services and experience for service users. Both contracts were awarded using the Crown Commercial Services framework.
- 4.3.2 The first contract was for the licences for the Implementation Layer software, MuleSoft, a market leading software solution which will bring more robustness and flexibility to the Council's ICT infrastructure through its ability to quickly and securely integrate messages between systems.
- 4.3.3 The second contract is for an implementation partner to support the Council with developing and implementing the new integration system and to develop the first set of system integrations which will subsequently be taken into support within the Council's ICT team.

5.0 Implementation Approach

- 5.1.1 Whilst the procurement activities described were being delivered the RBDxP team have continued to work closely with service areas to understand and validate the current services and processes which will be replicated within the new CRM system and to gain a detailed understanding of the functionality required to develop in the new system by the end February 2024.
- 5.1.2 The Programme will plan the implementation with the new suppliers based on high transaction and high-risk processes/forms being developed early in the Programme lifecycle.
- 5.1.3 Service resources will support the design of the new system at different points through the development lifecycle and not all forms will be developed for a particular service at the same time. This is to minimise the impact should not all current functionality be delivered by the time the current CRM system has to be decommissioned.
- 5.1.4 To ensure that we minimise impact to existing services we will focus on delivering key service requirements first. The team have held detailed workshops defining and agreeing these requirements in collaboration with service areas. This will be followed by future phases of the programme to develop and deliver the service Improvements identified as part of the detailed user engagement completed.
- 5.1.5 Beyond February 2024 the RBDxP team will continue to work with services to further develop the new systems to transform the Council's digital services and deliver the improvements and objectives as set out by the Programme. This will realise the benefits of developing new modern technologies for the Council's residents, businesses, service users and Members.
- 5.1.6 In order to build on the work carried out with stakeholders from across community groups, residents, Members and officers a number of 'Personas' have been developed. They are representations not of real people but of user experiences. As such they form a part of the user centred design process we will adopt when designing our new services and systems.
- 5.1.7 The developed 'Personas' will be used to inform how we design services, and they will also inform our user testing, sign off of our new systems and will be a key success criteria for the programme. By using 'Personas' we will ensure that our Design Principles are achieved.
- 5.1.8 One of the thirteen Personas we have developed is Sheila who is new to Manchester. One of Sheila's frustrations is the difficulty in raising issues and getting accurate updates when she has raised an issue. One of the things that she wants is to upload a photo with a report.
- 5.1.9 As part of the Programme we will use the Personas such as the example of Sheila above to understand the frustrations and needs of our residents and to ensure we design our services and systems to address these frustrations and

to significantly improve the experience for our residents when interacting with the Council and its services.

5.1.10 Examples of further Personas are given at Appendix A

5.2 Timescales

- 5.2.1 Project activities are being planned in August and September and a detailed plan to deliver the Programme will be developed and agreed in conjunction with our new suppliers.
- 5.2.2 The Programme will hold a checkpoint in September of this year in order to determine which service/transactional areas are at risk of not being fully developed in the new system by the end of February 2024 when the decommissioning of the existing CRM system will need to commence. This will be worked through in conjunction with service areas and alternative/interim processes agreed where required.
- 5.2.3 The Public Service Network (PSN) allows the Public sector to share information such as information on benefits from the Department of Work and Pensions. To ensure the Council remains compliant with the PSN requirements the decommissioning of the Council's existing CRM system, Microsoft CRM 4, and integration technology, Biztalk, will need to commence from the end of February 2024. This will enable the removal of the two systems which are out of extended support from the Council's technical infrastructure including the aging servers which these systems currently sit on.

6.0 Programme Priorities and Next Steps

- 6.1 The Resident and Business Digital Experience Programme's (RBDxP) current priorities and next steps are as follows:
- The RBDxP team will work with the new suppliers to onboard them into the Programme.
 - A detailed implementation plan and service order will be developed and agreed with both service areas and the new suppliers.
 - A comprehensive Programme communications plan will be produced including continued engagement with residents, businesses, community groups and Members.
 - The RBDxP team will continue with user research and engagement activities in particular focusing on underrepresented groups.
 - The design and build of the new systems will commence.
 - The decommissioning of the existing CRM and Integration systems will be planned.

7.0 Improvement activities in Revenues and Benefits

- 7.1 RBDxP will include Revenues and Benefits services and interactions in a later phase of the Programme and the Service have been involved in the

procurement process of the new CRM system. Alongside these activities the Revenues and Benefits service have been looking at how they can better engage and interact with residents.

- 7.2 As part of this work the Council Tax Service is introducing a new cloud-based automation platform to automate the back-office processing of a range of common online customer requests, including Direct Debit, change of address, single person discount, etc. Introduction of this new technology will enhance the customer journey by improving billing speed and the processing of customer requests and notifications whilst enabling resources to be released to spend more time providing proactive outreach support to identified vulnerable resident groups, communities and families. The first phase of this work is expected to be delivered by early 2024.
- 7.3 The Council Tax Service have used SMS reminders for missed Council Tax payments since 2017, which to date has worked well. To build on this approach, the service is working with a third-party to develop a mixed approach to early engagement with residents who are late with payments, including a three-channel engagement approach with automated outgoing phone calls, e-mails and text messages. Where residents received a phone call, they will be able to connect automatically with a Member of the Council Tax team to make a payment, arrange a sustainable payment plan and additional support which can be provided/accessed. This early opportunity to engage with the service, will offer support before recovery action takes place, will allow additional support to be identified and issues to be resolved, vulnerabilities to be highlighted and improve resident outcomes.
- 7.4 In addition to this, the service has introduced a series of new online webforms in July 2022 which gather comprehensive information, streamline requests and enhancing overall efficiency and speed of response. The team have worked with Strategic Communications, stakeholders and residents, promoting the benefits of using the new forms rather than using email as a method of contact. Following the introduction of the new online forms demand has shifted significantly from email to webform with 70% of digital contacts now being received via the webform. The new forms have also reduced the need for follow up contacts, saving time and ensuring residents experience smoother interactions and an improved experience when interacting with the service. The streamlined and improved process has led to a notable reduction in the overall volume of interactions made to the service since the new forms were introduced.

8.0 Recommendations

- 8.1 The Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee is requested to consider and comment on the content of this report, progress to date and support the next steps with this important Programme.

This page is intentionally left blank

Appendix 1 – RBDxP User Personas

The information below are the user personas developed by the RBDxP Team using data from the user research activities. Whilst the user personas are not real people, they depict real experiences for our residents, businesses, Members, and service users.

A presentation of the User Persons is available below:



RBDxP User personas
August 2023.pptx

Councillor Rogers

Who is Councillor Rogers?

- Has served as a Councillor in Manchester for 15 years
- Councillor Rogers raises enquiries, service requests and reports issues on behalf of their residents

My frustrations with the Council

- The system doesn't make it easy for me to understand the progress of multiple service requests that I have raised
- I want to be notified throughout the process, so that I can keep my residents informed about issues in their area

What I want from the Council

- I want regular and accurate updates on things I report that I can share with my residents



Anya New to IT

Who is Anya?

- Anya recently completed Digital Inclusion training at Moston library
- She's newly connected to the Internet, using a tablet which was bought for her by her son
- She's not confident in completing an online form and would like some help

My frustrations with the Council

- I can't find a telephone number when I am struggling to complete a request online and would like someone to help me

What I want from the Council

- Quick and easy way to access my Council account which means I can save time by not ringing
- To know I'm not being scammed when using the Council website
- If I do get stuck that I can ring the Contact Centre and an advisor can see my completed form and help me with requesting online so that I know how to do it in the future



Jonathan

Parks Maintenance Team

Our Manchester

Who is Jonathan?

- Jonathan works in parks across Manchester
- He has to report issues and enquiries from residents and visitors

My frustrations with the Council

- I spend time duplicating work – writing it in a notebook and then updating the CRM and our Back Office system when I'm back in the office.
- I can't access the CRM when I'm out working because it doesn't work on my device
- I have to update 2 systems to ensure all are up to date

What I want from the Council

- I want to be able to report things once, so I can spend more time on other work
- I want to be able to use CRM from anywhere to check on the progress of works and update cases as necessary

Councillor Rogers

Who is Councillor Rogers?

- Has served as a Councillor in Manchester for 15 years
- Councillor Rogers raises enquiries, service requests and reports issues on behalf of their residents

My frustrations with the Council

- The system doesn't make it easy for me to understand the progress of multiple service requests that I have raised
- I want to be notified throughout the process, so that I can keep my residents informed about issues in their area

What I want from the Council

- I want regular and accurate updates on things I report that I can share with my residents

Anya - New to IT

Who is Anya?

- Anya recently completed Digital Inclusion training at Moston library
- She's newly connected to the Internet, using a tablet which was bought for her by her son

- She's not confident in completing an online form and would like some help

My frustrations with the Council

- I can't find a telephone number when I am struggling to complete a request online and would like someone to help me

What I want from the Council

- Quick and easy way to access my Council account which means I can save time by not ringing
- To know I'm not being scammed when using the Council website
- If I do get stuck that I can ring the Contact Centre and an advisor can see my completed form and help me with requesting online so that I know how to do it in the future

Jonathan - Parks Maintenance Team

Who is Jonathan?

- Jonathan works in parks across Manchester
- He has to report issues and enquiries from residents and visitors

My frustrations with the Council

- I spend time duplicating work – writing it in a notebook and then updating the CRM and our Back Office system when I'm back in the office.
- I can't access the CRM when I'm out working because it doesn't work on my device
- I have to update 2 systems to ensure all are up to date

What I want from the Council

- I want to be able to report things once, so I can spend more time on other work
- I want to be able to use CRM from anywhere to check on the progress of works and update cases as necessary

This page is intentionally left blank

Manchester City Council Report for Information

Report to: Resource and Governance Scrutiny Committee – 7 September 2023

Subject: 2024/25 Budget Process

Report of: Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer

Summary

This is a short report on the current position of the Medium-Term Financial Plan and the planned approach to the 2024/25 budget process.

Recommendations

The committee is requested to consider the content of this report and comment on the proposed approach to updating the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

Wards Affected: All

Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city
The budget reflects the fact that the Council has declared a climate emergency by making carbon reduction a key consideration in the Council's planning and budget proposals.

Our Manchester Strategy Outcomes	Summary of the contribution to the strategy
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities.	The effective use of resources underpins the Council's activities in support of its strategic priorities.
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success.	
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities.	
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit and work.	

A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth.	
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--

Implications for:

Equal Opportunities Policy – there are no specific Equal Opportunities implications contained within this report.

Risk Management – as detailed in the report.

Legal Considerations – there are no specific legal considerations contained within the report.

Financial Consequences – Revenue

With the scale of funding pressures and future resource constraints, it is important that the Council takes action to ensure financial stability. This includes holding a robust position on reserves and maintaining the ability to deal with issues that arise during the financial year.

Financial Consequences – Capital

There are no capital consequences arising specifically from this report.

Contact Officers:

Name: Carol Culley
 Position: Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer
 Tel: 0161 234 3406
 E-mail: carol.culley@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Tom Wilkinson
 Position: Deputy City Treasurer
 Tel: 0161 234 1017
 E-mail: tom.wilkinson@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Samantha McArdle
 Position: Head of Corporate Finance
 Telephone: 0161 234 3472
 E-mail: samantha.mcardle@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.

Executive 15 February 2023: [Medium Term Financial Strategy and 2023/24 Revenue Budget](#)

Executive 31 May 2023: [Global Revenue Outturn 2022/23](#)

Executive 26 July 2023: [Revenue Monitoring to the end of May 2023](#)

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This report provides an update on the outlook for the Council's medium term financial strategy (MTFS) to support the Scrutiny Committee in its duty to provide oversight and challenge to the council's process for developing the 2024/25 budget. It represents the first opportunity for the Committee to engage with the budget setting process and outline expectations for future Scrutiny.
- 1.2. The Council has a well-established, robust process for annual budget setting and medium-term forecasting including recognition of demand and inflationary pressures and the development of deliverable savings plans. This gives the foundation for setting a balanced and sustainable budget. The allocation and prioritisation of resources provides the framework that enables the achievement of the organisation's key ambitions as set out in the Our Manchester Strategy and Corporate Plan.
- 1.3. This report sets out the framework for how the council will approach budget setting for 2024/25. Unlike in recent previous years, as part of the 2023/24 financial settlement, the government produced a Policy statement on the 2024/25 financial envelope outlining the likely size of a number of key funding streams. Despite this, uncertainty remains around some other key funding sources. This report sets out details of a proposed budget planning process for 2024/25. It recognises that there is a need for some flexibility to respond to these risks and uncertainties and sets out a summary of key considerations to enable the setting of a balanced budget.
- 1.4. This report should be considered in the context of the 2022/23 outturn position reported to Executive 31 May 2023, reporting an overspend of £4.5m and the second monitoring report of 2023/24 which will be considered by Executive on 13 September, the draft position is a forecast overspend of £9.6m.

2. Current Medium Term Financial Plan Approved February 2023

- 2.1. The final 2023/24 settlement included funding allocations for 2023/24 and the policy direction for 2024/25. The Council's February 2023 MTFS identified that the Council, in common with other upper tier local authorities, needed to address a material budget shortfall in 2024/25 and beyond. Simultaneously there remains some uncertainty about the level of funding for 2024/25 and the potential for additional pressures to emerge during the budget setting process.
- 2.2. Table One sets out the high level MTFS position as presented in February 2023, which has been updated to reflect the addition of a further financial year to the planning period in order to maintain the Council's usual three year MTFS reporting horizon. As part of last years budget setting process savings of £36.2m were identified and approved, to be achieved over three years. Officers estimated the scale of the remaining funding gap by 2025/26 at £58m, which would reduce to £40m after the use of £17m smoothing reserves.

- 2.3. Extending the MTFS for an additional year, 2026/27, based on the same broad assumptions, adds a further £13.7m to the gap to be addressed, resulting in a total revised gap of £71.9m for the MTFS. This could be reduced to £54.2m with the application of £17.8m smoothing reserve. This would fully utilise the balance of smoothing reserve available and potentially create a very large funding gap in 2027/28, prior to the expected return of commercial income.
- 2.4. These forecasts were based on reasonable assumptions around the likely level of resources available and forecast spending requirements. As always, the assumptions are subject to change as more up to date and robust information becomes available.

Table One: Forecast MTFS reported to Executive 15 February 2023

	2023 / 24	2024 / 25	2025 / 26	2026 / 27
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Resources Available				
Business Rates / Settlement Related Funding	374,725	380,005	386,872	391,309
Council Tax	217,968	228,087	237,279	246,840
Grants and other External Funding	126,439	127,968	116,055	116,055
Use of Reserves	16,014	15,003	10,522	9,222
Total Resources Available	735,146	751,063	750,728	763,426
Resources Required				
Corporate Costs	111,502	115,570	114,753	116,982
Directorate Costs	640,113	677,919	730,387	754,536
Total Resources Required	751,615	793,489	845,140	871,518
Budget Gap	16,469	42,426	94,412	108,092
Savings options identified	(15,396)	(25,568)	(36,170)	(36,170)
Gap after approved savings	1,073	16,858	58,242	71,922
Use of Smoothing Reserves	(1,073)	(16,858)	(17,850)	(17,758)
Remaining Gap	0	0	40,392	54,164

- 2.5. The main assumptions underlying the position forecast in February 2023 were as follows:
- Government grant funding would be broadly flat in 2024/25 (i.e. essentially a rollover of 2023/24 funding levels) other than known increases to Social care grants and the planned end of New Homes Bonus from 2024/25.
 - Business Rates Multiplier uplift in line with September 2023 CPI, estimated at 7.4% when the budget was set. This also impacts the tariff/top up arrangement. There is a risk the government may freeze Business Rates. They usually compensate LA's when this happens.
 - Increases in council tax over the MTFS period, including an assumed 4.99% increase in 2024/25 for planning purposes as agreed by Full Council in

February 2023 and shown in the above table. It should be noted that every 1% change in council tax assumptions increases or decreases the budget gap by approximately £2.2m in 2024/25.

- Delivery of an approved savings programme of £36.2m over three years
- Use of smoothing reserves of c£17m a year for three years
- Cost pressures including:
 - 6% for pay inflation in 2023/24 and 4% thereafter.
 - Non-pay inflation in line with contractual rates or CPI forecasts where appropriate totaling £14.5m in 2024/25.
 - Demographic growth pressures for Adults and Childrens, totaling £6.7m in 2024/25

2.6. It is important to note the medium-term position set out in February 2023 included significant use of smoothing reserves at c£17m a year for three years. Whilst this is a sound strategy to give time to develop longer-term savings or increased income, it does represent a managed risk for future years. An ongoing reliance on reserves would not represent a sustainable long-term approach.

3. Context

3.1. Local Government Funding declined by nearly a third between 2010 and 2021, according to a February 2022 Public Accounts Committee¹ report on the Local Government Finance System. The report found that council income was £8.4bn lower in real terms than it had been a decade before. In recent years the significant and sustained reductions experienced in Central Government funding to Local Government have lessened, with more reasonable funding settlements being provided since 2021/22. However, much of the new funding was initially for adult social care reforms and was accompanied by an increasing expectation that local authorities will raise resources locally (through council tax increases). Recent analysis from the BBC states that Local Government faces a collective £5bn funding gap by 2025/26.²

3.2. In addition to dealing with the legacy of over ten years of austerity there are increasing service pressures driven by a complex mix of factors including demographic changes, unfunded burdens such as the National Living Wage, the needs of the people who draw upon social care services becoming increasingly complex, and by the wider economy including the abnormally high levels of inflation and the impact this has on council contracts and services.

3.3. This position is becoming increasingly unsustainable nationally, resulting in a number of local authorities reporting significant financial difficulties and becoming subject to government intervention.

¹ <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/8682/documents/88208/default/>

² <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-66428191>

- 3.4. The Council still has some financial resilience, despite receiving a disproportionate share of the national cuts. This is due to strong financial scrutiny and governance, robust annual budget setting and savings programmes and smoothing the use of one-off income and grants over 2-3 years. This is supported by the reserves strategy and controls around borrowing. However, the Council must not be complacent and continued vigilance and forward planning is vital to continue delivering balanced budgets and protect critical services for residents.

4. Proposed budget approach

- 4.1. As has been the case in recent years, it is anticipated that the Council will not receive any detailed information about funding allocations for 2024/25 until autumn 2023 at the earliest (and probably December 2023). The Government's planned reform of local government funding has been delayed until at least 2025/26 and it is therefore unlikely that the 2024/25 Settlement will provide any sort of multi-year allocation which would support the Council to develop its financial strategy with greater planning certainty. As a result, the overall level of uncertainty means that budget setting for 2024/25, and the wider financial environment for local government, is set to remain highly challenging. The potential delay in the return of significant commercial income until after 2027/28 also leaves the City Council in a weaker financial position unless continued proactive action is taken.
- 4.2. Whilst there are not any significant reductions in funding from central government expected, the demand and cost pressures being incurred are outstripping any growth in our resources, creating a widening financial gap which must be addressed.
- 4.3. The 2023/24 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy agreed by the Council in March 2023 provides a sound foundation upon which to develop the 2024/25 Budget. The proposed principles are as follows:
- Working to a 5-year model behind the scenes to take a longer term view.
 - For 2024/25 focus on reducing and mitigating pressures and managing within the existing envelope
 - The requirement to take at least an additional £50m costs out of our base by 2025/26 to be sustainable.
 - Ensure that use of government grants maximised
 - Avoid the use of one-off income to fund ongoing costs as that creates a financial cliff edge – maintain principles of smoothing reserve
 - Balance budget cuts with use of smoothing reserves to remain sustainable but not to make cuts which aren't required.
 - Reserves are being used to help close the 2024/25 budget gap and the smoothing reserves applied over three years.

4.4. The Council's proposed strategy is to use any additional funding, after covering new priority investment requirements and demand pressures, to help close the budget gap in future years and reduce the need for significant cuts in 2025/26 and beyond.

5. Refresh of the 2024/25 position

5.1. A review of resources available is underway, taking account of the 2023/24 position and the trailblazer devolution deal for Greater Manchester announced 15 March 2023. This includes a single settlement from the next Spending Review and expanded responsibilities in several policy areas, including transport; skills and employment; and housing, regeneration and retrofitting. Of immediate significance to the Council's budget the announcement included confirmation that the GM 100% Business Rates retention scheme would continue for a further 10 years until 2034/35. The MTFs had assumed the Council would revert to 50% retention from 2024/25. The government has indicated a business rates system reset will happen in 2025/26 at the earliest but this is still to be confirmed along with the format and extent of the reset.

5.2. Business rates collection for 2022/23 and 2023/24 to date is better than expected and 2024/25 income should be uplifted in line with the September CPI. The business rates position will be clearer by late October once the September CPI is announced and there will be 6 months of current year performance to inform next year's forecast.

5.3. The MTFP included a holding assumption that the funding diverted from the planned Social Care reforms to Social Care grant might be redirected back to the reforms in 2025/26. This is no longer considered likely although significant risks remain around Social Care and the wider settlement funding announcements for 2025/26 and beyond.

5.4. The above changes should result in additional resources compared to that assumed in the MTFs, however offset against this are a number of increased pressures which must be considered as part of refreshing the 2024/25 budget. These include:

- Inflation peaked at 11.1% in October 2022 and remains higher than projected at 6.8% in July. The future allowance for inflation will need to be increased to manage the ongoing higher than budgeted impact and it is estimated that an increase of £3.7 in 24/25 and further £2m from 25/26 is required. This would give an allowance of £8m a year for 2024/25 then £5m a year from 2025/26.
- Adult Social Care reflects the national challenges facing health and social care in terms of numbers, complexity and cost. The national trend showing growth of 3-4% growth per year in the size of population needing long term care. There are also significant market supply pressures.

- Children's Social care numbers of Children Looked After remain relatively stable however the complexity of need of the current cohort is increasing and the external market is challenging. The reduced availability of fostering placements nationally has led to increased use of external residential placements, with placement cost in Manchester increasing by 44% in the current financial year. In addition, 15% of Manchester's Looked After Children are Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker children (UASC). The cost of supporting this cohort is expected to exceed the government funding available, particularly in relation to care leavers.
- Homelessness has made significant progress in successfully reducing the number of families in B&B accommodation, through investment in prevention services, and is bucking the national trend. However, the service is part funded by a number of significant grants which currently run through until the end of 2024/25, this must be kept under review.
- Demography requirements for waste disposal and collection have been forecast in line with the growth in housing stock and population increases.
- Due to the changing nature of ICT technology future investment requirements are more likely to be revenue in nature.

5.5. In addition, General Fund reserve is held in the region of £25m to provide a buffer for risks that emerge in year and provide some smoothing of over and underspends across financial years. As at Period 4 the 2023/24 budget is forecast to overspend by c£9.6m. Work is in progress to mitigate this down. Any overspend will be a call on General Fund reserves, and there will be a requirement to top this back up in 2024/25 to maintain a prudent level.

5.6. Further work is underway to verify the amounts and identify actions to offset the pressures. Whilst there will be some additional capacity it is unlikely to be sufficient to meet the emerging pressures. The outcome of this exercise will be reported back to the November Scrutiny Committees.

6. Next Steps

6.1. An indicative balanced 2024/25 budget was set out in the February 2023 MTFs, including the planned use of reserves. The current years pressures and updated forecasts mean that the position will need to be updated and this work is underway and will be included in the November reports.

6.2. 2024/25 was planned to be a 'light touch' budget process, sticking to the budget position included in the MTFP. This report highlighted the need for early planning to address the 2025/26 budget gap. The pressures outlined in this report mean that work is even more essential and will start in the Autumn. There also remains considerable uncertainty around the longer-term funding for local government with all parties stressing the lack of financial resources available.

- 6.3. Work is continuing throughout September and October to increase understanding of the pressures and risks faced and identify mitigations where possible. The updated position will be brought back to this committee on 9 November and other scrutiny committees will be asked to review the proposals for the areas within their remit. Table Two outlines the planned activity to enable a balanced budget to be set at March Council.

Table Two – Budget Process Timetable 2024/25

Planned Activity	Timeframe
2022/23 Outturn reported to Executive	31 May 2023
2023/24 Period 2 budget monitoring report to Executive	26 July 2023
Resources and Scrutiny Committee input to development of 2024/25 Budget	7 Sept 2023
2023/24 Period 4 budget monitoring report to Executive	13 Sept 2023
Individual scrutiny committees review proposals within the remit of that committee	7 to 9 November 2023
Government Autumn Budget	TBC October / November 2023
Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement announced including provisional council tax and precept arrangements	TBC December 2023
Executive / RAGOS considers outcomes of settlement, service and financial planning, EQIA and consultation feedback and agrees revenue budget approach	January 2024
Confirmation of Council Tax and Business Rates Base	31 January 2024
Final Local Government Finance Settlement	TBC Feb 2024
Scrutiny Committees 2024/25 Budget scrutiny	Feb 2024
Executive recommends Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-25 to 2026-27, revenue budget, capital programme and level of council tax for 2024/25	Feb 2024
Budget RAGOS	26 Feb 2024
Council agrees Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024/25 to 2026/27, revenue budget, capital programme and level of council tax for 2024/25	1 March 2024

- 6.4. At the November round of scrutiny meetings, the reports will be tailored to the remit of each committee as outlined in Table three.

Table Three – Scrutiny Committee Remits

Date	Meeting	Services Included
7 Nov 23	Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee	Sport, Leisure, Events Libraries Galleries and Culture Compliance and Community Safety Housing Operations including Homelessness Neighbourhood teams
7 Nov 23	Economy and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee	City Centre Regeneration Strategic Development Housing and residential growth Planning, Building Control, and licensing Investment Estate Work and skills Highways
8 Nov 23	Health Scrutiny Committee	Adult Social Care Public Health
8 Nov 23	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee	Children and Education Services
9 Nov 23	Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee	Chief Exec Corporate Services Revenue and Benefits / Customer and Welfare Support Business Units
9 Nov 23	Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee	Waste and Recycling Parks Grounds maintenance

7. Conclusion

- 7.1. This paper sets out an outline timetable and approach to the Council's budget planning process for 2024/25, while recognising that significant risks and uncertainties remain.
- 7.2. The economic and government spending position continues to be uncertain. An updated position will be provided at the 9 November Resources and Governance Scrutiny meeting.
- 7.3. The Council's track record of delivering a balanced budget, coupled with a robust budget planning approach, provides a solid basis for development, but with the pressures that this council and others are facing this is becoming more difficult to maintain.

This page is intentionally left blank

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee – 7 September 2023

Subject: Overview Report

Report of: Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit

Summary

This report provides the following information:

- Recommendations Monitor
- Key Decisions
- Work Programme
- Items for Information

Recommendation

The Committee is invited to discuss and note the information provided and agree the work programme.

Wards Affected: All

Contact Officer:

Name: Charlotte Lynch
Position: Governance and Scrutiny Team Leader
Telephone: 0161 219 2119
E-mail: charlotte.lynch@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 contains recommendations made by the Committee and responses to them indicating whether the recommendation will be implemented, and if it will be, how this will be done.

Items highlighted in grey have been actioned and will be removed from future reports.

Date	Item	Recommendation	Action	Contact Officer
22 June 2023	RGSC/23/29 Elections Act 2022 and the 4 May 2023 Local Election - Progress Report on its Impacts	That further information on the summer engagement campaign to encourage electors to register for a Voter Authority Certificate be provided for members to share in their communities/at events.	The recommendation is accepted, and the Elections Unit are currently putting together a dissemination and engagement pack in consultation with appropriate sections of the Council as well as key external forums and groups. A short progress report is appended to the Overview Report.	Sean Morris (Elections and Electoral Registration Policy Officer)
22 June 2023	RGSC/23/31 Major Contracts	That a more substantial report on Major Contracts be provided at the next update and include an appendix with more detailed information on each major contract and whether insourcing would be viable.	A response to this recommendation has been requested.	Mark Leaver (Strategic Lead – Commissioning)

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 **25 August 2023**, containing details of the decisions under the Committee's remit is included below. This is to keep members informed of what decisions are being taken and, where appropriate, include in the work programme of the Committee.

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Decision Due Date	Consultation	Background documents	Officer Contact
Corporate Core					
Award of Electricity Supply contracts from existing Framework Agreements (2022/08/22A) To award a contract for the	City Treasurer (Deputy Chief Executive)	Before 30 Sep 2022		Award Report	Peter Schofield, Head of Integrated Commissioning and Procurement peter.schofield@manchester.gov.uk, Walter Dooley, Group Manager - Energy

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Decision Due Date	Consultation	Background documents	Officer Contact
supply of Electricity from the Council's existing HH (large sites) and NHH (smaller sites) frameworks via direct award to the incumbent suppliers.					walter.dooley@manchester.gov.uk
<p>Adopting new powers to increase the Council Tax on some empty properties (2023/01/09A)</p> <p>To consider whether or not to charge double Council Tax on empty furnished properties (including second homes) and empty, unfurnished properties that have been empty for between 1 and 2 years from 1 April 2024 onwards.</p>	Executive	15 Feb 2023		Report to Executive	Charles Metcalfe, Head of Corporate Revenues charles.metcalfe@manchester.gov.uk
<p>Funding towards City Centre Free Bus (2023/02/07A)</p> <p>Award a 3-year contract and enter into a funding agreement with Transport for Greater Manchester (TFGM)</p>	Executive	22 Mar 2023		Report to Executive	Phil Havenhand, Interim Head of Infrastructure & Environment Phil.Havenhand@manchester.gov.uk

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Decision Due Date	Consultation	Background documents	Officer Contact
<p>TC435 - Provision of a Multifunctional Device and Print Management Service (2023/03/20A)</p> <p>To contract with a supply for the provision of multifunction print devices and print management services</p>	City Treasurer (Deputy Chief Executive)	23 May 2023		Contract Report	Keith Hayes, ICT Project Manager keith.hayes@manchester.gov.uk
<p>Irish World Heritage Centre - Loan re-financing and restructuring (2023/05/15A)</p> <p>To agree to the restructuring and refinancing of existing loan finance arrangements to ensure that there is an affordable and sustainable agreement in place between the Council and the Irish Diaspora Foundation Limited.</p>	Executive	13 Sep 2023		Part B report to the Executive	Sarah Narici, Head of Programme Office sarah.narici@manchester.gov.uk
<p>Perimeter Firewall (2023/06/02A)</p> <p>To award funding to enable</p>	City Treasurer (Deputy Chief Executive)	Not before 30th Jun 2023		Briefing Note	Andrew Blore, ICT Strategic Business Partner andrew.blore@manchester.gov.uk

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Decision Due Date	Consultation	Background documents	Officer Contact
the purchase of network infrastructure.					
<p>TC979 Archival Storage, Non-Archival Storage and Scanning Framework (2023/06/08C)</p> <p>To seek approval to appoint a supplier to provide TC979 Framework for Archival Storage, Non-Archival Storage and Scanning</p> <p>The framework is split into 3 Lots as follows: Lot 1: Archival Storage Lot 2: Semi Active Records (Non-Archival) Lot 3: Scanning and Storage of Planning and Building Control Records and other Council Departments</p>	City Treasurer (Deputy Chief Executive)	Not before 8th Jul 2023		Report and recommendation	
<p>Framework Agreement for Supply of Electricity and Electricity Related Services (TC970) (2023/06/14A)</p>	City Treasurer (Deputy Chief Executive)	Not before 14th Jul 2023		Report and recommendation	

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Decision Due Date	Consultation	Background documents	Officer Contact
To implement a new framework to allow for future call-off contracts for the supply of electricity and related services to MCC's corporate estate (including street lighting) and for associated organisations (e.g. Manchester schools etc).					
<p>RBDxP Integration Layer (Mulesoft) Licences (2023/06/28C)</p> <p>To award the contract for the provision of Mulesoft integration layer licences following a procurement exercise using Crown Commercial Services Technology Products and Associated Services (TPAS) Framework, as part of the resident and Business Digital Experience project</p>	City Treasurer (Deputy Chief Executive)	Not before 6th Jul 2023		Report and Recommendation	Alex Forbes, Programme Manager (ICT) alexander.forbes@manchester.gov.uk
<p>Power Purchase Agreement TC1162 (2023/07/04A)</p>	City Treasurer (Deputy Chief Executive)	Not before 4th Aug 2023		Contract Report and Recommendation	Sarah Narici, Head of Programme Office sarah.narici@manchester.gov.u

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Decision Due Date	Consultation	Background documents	Officer Contact
To appoint a developer for a long-term offsite virtual power purchase agreement with a wind or solar PV developer with a project that has REGOs that are valid for the Council's Scope 2 reporting (i.e. REGOs that are valid within Great Britain.					k
<p>Digital automation for the Revenues Service (2023/07/18A)</p> <p>The appointment of provider for digital automation of various processes within the Revenues Service</p>	City Treasurer (Deputy Chief Executive)	Not before 16th Aug 2023		Report & Recommendation	Charles Metcalfe, Head of Corporate Revenues charles.metcalfe@manchester.gov.uk
<p>Award for Electricity Supply contracts from existing framework agreement (TC970) (2023/08/18A)</p> <p>To call-off a contract for the supply of electricity and related services to MCC's corporate estate (including</p>	City Treasurer (Deputy Chief Executive)	Not before 18th Sep 2023		Report and Recommendation	

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Decision Due Date	Consultation	Background documents	Officer Contact
street lighting) and for associated organisations (e.g. Manchester schools etc). Due to way in which the energy market currently operates, this decision is likely to be taken under urgency procedures.					
Development and Growth					
<p>Strategic land and buildings acquisition 2019/06/03C</p> <p>The approval of capital expenditure for the purpose of the strategic acquisition of land and buildings to support the Eastlands Regeneration Framework</p>	City Treasurer (Deputy Chief Executive)	Not before 1st Dec 2022		Checkpoint 4 Business Case & Briefing Note	Richard Cohen, Strategic Lead - Development (South and East) richard.cohen@manchester.gov.uk
<p>Disposal of site of former Chorlton Leisure Centre for residential development (21/05/13A)</p> <p>Approval to the terms for the leasehold disposal of the site of the former</p>	Strategic Director - (Growth and Development)	Not before 3rd Jul 2023		Report to the Strategic Director of Growth and Development	Mike Robertson, Principal Development Surveyor mike.robertson@manchester.gov.uk

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Decision Due Date	Consultation	Background documents	Officer Contact
Chorlton Leisure Centre for residential development.					
<p>Restructure of existing multiple ground leases at Manchester Science Park into a new overriding single head lease (2021/07/16A)</p> <p>Restructure of existing multiple ground leases at Manchester Science Park into a new overriding single head lease.</p>	Strategic Director - (Growth and Development)	Not before 1st Sep 2023		Report and recommendations	Mike Robertson, Principal Development Surveyor mike.robertson@manchester.gov.uk
<p>Land at Downley Drive, New Islington/Ancoats (2022/02/18B)</p> <p>Land disposal by way of lease for residential development at Downley Drive, New Islington/Ancoats.</p>	Strategic Director - (Growth and Development)	Not before 18th Mar 2022		Report and recommendations	
<p>Disposal of the former Gala Bingo, Rowlandsway, Manchester, M22 5RS (2022/05/19A)</p>	Strategic Director - (Growth and Development)	Not before 19th Jun 2022		Report to the Strategic Director of Growth and Development	Joe Martin, Senior Development Surveyor joe.martin@manchester.gov.uk

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Decision Due Date	Consultation	Background documents	Officer Contact
Approval to the terms for the leasehold disposal of the former Gala Bingo, Rowlandsway, Manchester, M22 5RS.					
<p>Lower Campfield and Upper Campfield - granting of new ground leases (2022/09/07A)</p> <p>Approval to the granting of new ground leases to allow the repair and refurbishment of both buildings by the lessee.</p>	Chief Executive	Not before 6th Oct 2022		Report to the Chief Executive and Strategic Director of Growth and Development	David Norbury, Strategic Lead Development City Centre david.norbury@manchester.gov.uk
<p>Land at Kelbrook Road (2022/11/14A)</p> <p>Approval to dispose of land at Kelbrook Road for development</p>	Strategic Director - (Growth and Development)	4 Jan 2023		Report to the Strategic Director – Growth & Development	Thomas Pyatt, Senior Development Surveyor Tel: 0161 234 5469 thomas.pyatt@manchester.gov.uk
<p>Lease Renewal to National Express at Chorlton Street Bus Station (2023/01/31A)</p> <p>Approval to renew the lease</p>	Director of Development	28 Feb 2023		Delegated Decision Report to Head of Development and Director of Development	Ken Richards, Principal Development Surveyor ken.richards@manchester.gov.uk

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Decision Due Date	Consultation	Background documents	Officer Contact
to National Express for a period of up to 10 years.					
<p>Disposal of land at the back of Ancoats, Manchester (2023/03/23A)</p> <p>To approve the disposal of land bounded by Naval Street, Radium Street, Poland Street and Jersey Street</p>	Strategic Director - (Growth and Development)	23 Apr 2023		Briefing Note	Bhavesh Chauhan, Principal Development Surveyor bhavesh.chauhan@manchester.gov.uk
<p>The disposal of land at Store Street Manchester (2023/04/25A)</p> <p>To approve the disposal of land at Store Street, Manchester.</p>	Strategic Director - (Growth and Development)	Not before 25th May 2023		Briefing Note	
<p>Factory International Works (2023/06/28A)</p> <p>To approve capital funding for Factory International for works to achieve static completion</p>	City Treasurer (Deputy Chief Executive), Executive	26 Jul 2023		Report to Executive	Rebecca Heron, Strategic Director (Growth and Development) rebecca.heron@manchester.gov.uk
<p>Promotion Agreement for disposal of land (2023/06/29A)</p>	Strategic Director - (Growth and	Not before 28th Jul 2023		Delegated approval report to the Strategic	Mike Robertson, Principal Development Surveyor mike.robertson@manchester.gov.uk

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Decision Due Date	Consultation	Background documents	Officer Contact
To approve the terms agreed for entering into a promotion agreement to dispose of land for residential development	Development)			Director of Growth and Development	v.uk
<p>Disposal of Elizabeth Yarwood Court, Kincardine Road, Manchester, M13 9SY (2023/07/24A)</p> <p>Approval of terms for disposal of site to facilitate commercial development</p>	Strategic Director - (Growth and Development)	Not before 22nd Aug 2023		Report to the Strategic Director of Growth and Development	Joe Martin, Senior Development Surveyor joe.martin@manchester.gov.uk
<p>Disposal of land at Upper Brook Street, Manchester, M13 9XH (2023/07/24B)</p> <p>Approval of terms for disposal of land to facilitate mixed use development.</p>	Strategic Director - (Growth and Development)	Not before 22nd Aug 2023		Report to the Strategic Director of Growth and Development	Joe Martin, Senior Development Surveyor joe.martin@manchester.gov.uk
<p>Disposal of land at Hinchley Road, Charlestown, Manchester, M9 7FG (2023/08/21A)</p> <p>Approval to the freehold</p>	Strategic Director - (Growth and Development)	Not before 21st Sep 2023		Report and Recommendation	

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Decision Due Date	Consultation	Background documents	Officer Contact
disposal of land at Hinchley Road for residential development.					
<p>Land at 1-7 Gorton Road, M11 (22/08/2023A)</p> <p>Grant a Deed of Variation to the existing lease of land that will consent to subletting and change of use.</p>	Strategic Director - (Growth and Development)	Not before 22nd Sep 2023		Report & Heads of Terms	
<p>Extension of the waste & street cleansing contract (2022/03/30B)</p> <p>To fund the increase in contract fee from 2023 for the remainder of the contract period - £7.95m.</p>	Executive	1 Jun 2022		Waste Report to Environment & Climate Change Scrutiny Committee (10 March 2022)	Matthew Bennett matthew.bennett@manchester.gov.uk
<p>Extension of Repairs and Maintenance contract for MCC Housing Services (2023/06/20A)</p> <p>To extend the Contract for Repairs and Maintenance for MCC Housing Services for up to a maximum of 3</p>	City Treasurer (Deputy Chief Executive)	Not before 19th Jul 2023		Report and recommendation	David Ashmore, Director of Housing Operations david.ashmore@manchester.gov.uk

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Decision Due Date	Consultation	Background documents	Officer Contact
years					
<p>Library customer self-service equipment (RFID) and Refresh public PCs (2023/08/09A)</p> <p>To approve capital funding to refresh the district Library public facing IT equipment, directly supporting reading, literacy and digital inclusion and provision which align with Council strategic objectives</p>	City Treasurer (Deputy Chief Executive)	Not before 7th Sep 2023		Capital Checkpoint 4	Andrew Blore, ICT Strategic Business Partner andrew.blore@manchester.gov.uk

3. Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee - Work Programme – September 2023

Thursday 7 September 2023, 10:00am (Report deadline Wednesday 23 August 2023 **to account for Bank Holiday**)

Item	Purpose	Executive Member	Strategic Director/Lead Officer	Comments
Update from the Revenues and Benefits Unit	To receive an update on the activity of the Revenues and Benefits Unit including details of ongoing cost-of-living schemes and activities delivered by the service.	Cllr Akbar (Finance and Resources)	Carol Culley Lee Owen Matthew Hassall Charles Metcalfe	
Council Tax Support Scheme (CTSS)	To bring recommendations on the CTSS options from 2024/25 onwards, with a view to taking approved recommendations to public consultation in the autumn.	Cllr Akbar (Finance and Resources)	Carol Culley Lee Owen Matthew Hassall Charles Metcalfe	
Residents and Business Digital Experience Programme (RBDxP) Update	To receive an update on the delivery of RBDxP which is a key workstream as part of the Future Shape programme.	Cllr Akbar (Finance and Resources)	Carol Culley Lee Owen Jon Burt Alex Forbes	
Artificial Intelligence	To receive a report on the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on the Council's ways of working and what work is taking place to approach this.	Cllr Akbar (Finance and Resources)	Carol Culley Chris Wanley	
2024/25 Budget Process	To receive a short report on the current position of the Medium-Term Financial Plan and planned approach to setting the 2024/25 budget process.	Cllr Akbar (Finance and Resources)	Carol Culley Tom Wilkinson Sam McArdle	

		Resources)		
Overview Report	The monthly report includes the recommendations monitor, relevant key decisions, the Committee's work programme and any items for information.	N/A	Scrutiny Support	

Thursday 12 October 2023, 10:00am (Report deadline Monday 2 October 2023)

Item	Purpose	Executive Member	Strategic Director/Lead Officer	Comments
Workforce Equalities Strategy Progress Update	To receive an update on progress to date to increase diversity, ensure the Council is an inclusive employer and to challenge discrimination.	Cllr Akbar (Finance and Resources)	Carol Culley Mark Bennett	
Workforce Strategy Update	To receive the new Workforce Strategy.	Cllr Akbar (Finance and Resources)	Carol Culley Mark Bennett	
Future Shape of the Council Update	To receive an update on progress to date with the Future Shape of the Council programme, which is evolving the Council's ways of working in order to meet current challenges.	Cllr Rahman (Statutory Deputy Leader) Cllr Akbar (Finance and Resources)	Carol Culley Mark Bennett	
Section 106 Governance	To receive a report on the governance arrangements relating to Section 106.	Cllr Akbar (Finance and Resources) Cllr White (Housing and Development)	Julie Roscoe	Deferred from July 2023 with Chair's agreement.
Overview Report	The monthly report includes the recommendations monitor, relevant key decisions, the Committee's work programme and any items for information.	N/A	Scrutiny Support	

Thursday 9 November 2023, 10:00am (Report deadline Monday 30 October 2023)

Item	Purpose	Executive Member	Strategic Director/Lead Officer	Comments
Update on New Procurement Regulations	To receive a report on the updated Procurement Regulations coming into effect and how the Council intends to implement them.	Cllr Akbar (Finance and Resources)	Carol Culley Tom Wilkinson Peter Schofield	
Update on the Autumn Statement	To receive a short update on the impact of the Autumn Statement on the Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan and budget.	Cllr Akbar (Finance and Resources)	Carol Culley Tom Wilkinson Sam McArdle	
Corporate Core Budget Proposals 2024/25	To receive a report outlining the budget position for 2024/25 and progress in reaching a balanced budget, including preliminary savings and investment options.	Councillor Craig Councillor Akbar	Carol Culley Tom Wilkinson Paul Hindle	
Overview Report	The monthly report includes the recommendations monitor, relevant key decisions, the Committee's work programme and any items for information.	N/A	Scrutiny Support	

Thursday 7 December 2023, 10:00am (Report deadline Monday 27 November 2023)

Item	Purpose	Executive Member	Strategic Director/Lead Officer	Comments
Review of Investments being made by the Council into its Capital Strategy in terms of delivering future value-for-money post-COVID19	To receive a report on the Council's capital investments being made through the Capital Strategy in terms of delivering future VFM.	Cllr Akbar (Finance and Resources)	Carol Culley Tom Wilkinson Tim Seagrave Jared Allen	
Annual Property Report	To receive the annual update on the work of the Estates and Facilities service (Corporate Core directorate) and the Development team (Growth and Development directorate), with particular reference to the use of agency staff.	Cllr Rahman (Statutory Deputy Leader) Cllr White (Housing and Development)	Carol Culley Becca Heron David Lord Richard Munns	
Housing Revenue Account 2024/25 to 2026/27	To receive a report on the proposed Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget process for 2024/25 and a refresh of the 30-year business plan.	Cllr White (Housing and Development)	Tom Wilkinson Dave Ashmore	
Overview Report	The monthly report includes the recommendations monitor, relevant key decisions, the Committee's work programme and any items for information.	N/A	Scrutiny Support	

Thursday 11 January 2024, 10:00am (Report deadline Friday 29 December 2023 to account for Bank Holiday)

Item	Purpose	Executive Member	Strategic Director/Lead Officer	Comments
Budget Settlement 2024/25	To receive a report on the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement to outline the impact on the Council's budget position for 2024/25.	Cllr Akbar (Finance and Resources)	Carol Culley Tom Wilkinson Sam McArdle	
Council Tax Support Scheme Consultation Responses	To receive an update on the public consultation responses to the approved Council Tax Support Scheme recommendations.	Cllr Akbar (Finance and Resources)	Carol Culley Lee Owen Matthew Hassall Charles Metcalfe	
Sales Fees and Charges	To review the Council's commercial activities through trading operations and the setting of fees and charges.	Cllr Akbar (Finance and Resources)	Carol Culley Tom Wilkinson Tim Seagrave	
Commercial Activity Update	To receive a report on the performance of the portfolio of Council commercial activities, including companies, Joint Ventures, loans, equity investments and development agreements.	Cllr Akbar (Finance and Resources) Cllr White (Housing and Development)	Carol Culley Tom Wilkinson Sarah Narici David Lynch David Lord	
Manchester Heat Network Business Plan Update	To receive a performance update and the 2023/24 business plan for the Manchester Heat Network Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV), which is wholly owned by the Council. This report will also outline the SPV's approach to securing new customers to the network and the decarbonisation of the asset.	Cllr Akbar (Finance and Resources) Cllr Rawlins (Environment and Transport)	Carol Culley Tom Wilkinson Sarah Narici	
Overview Report	The monthly report includes the recommendations	N/A	Scrutiny	

	monitor, relevant key decisions, the Committee's work programme and any items for information.		Support	
--	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--	---------	--

Thursday 8 February 2024, 10:00am (Report deadline Monday 29 January 2024)

Item	Purpose	Executive Member	Strategic Director/Lead Officer	Comments
Corporate Core Budget Proposals 2024/25	To receive the final 2024/25 budget proposals that will go onto February's Budget Executive and Scrutiny and March's Council.	Cllr Akbar (Finance and Resources)	Carol Culley Tom Wilkinson Paul Hindle	
Overview Report	The monthly report includes the recommendations monitor, relevant key decisions, the Committee's work programme and any items for information.	N/A	Scrutiny Support	

Monday 26 February 2024, 10:00am – BUDGET (Report deadline Wednesday 14 February 2024)

Item	Purpose	Executive Member	Strategic Director/Lead Officer	Comments
The Council's Budget 2024/25	To receive an update on the Council's financial position following scrutiny of the draft budget proposals and Directorate budget plans by all Scrutiny Committees.	Cllr Akbar (Finance and Resources)	Carol Culley Tom Wilkinson	

Thursday 7 March 2024, 10:00am (Report deadline Monday 26 February 2024)

Item	Purpose	Executive Member	Strategic Director/Lead Officer	Comments
Manchester City Council Connections with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA)	To update the committee on Manchester's connections with GMCA in terms of partnerships, governance, and financial arrangements.	Cllr Craig (Leader) Cllr Akbar (Finance and Resources)	Carol Culley James Binks Tom Wilkinson	
Manchester City Council Connections with the Greater Manchester Integrated Care System and the Manchester Locality	To update the committee on Manchester's links with the Greater Manchester Integrated Care System, including governance and financial arrangements.	Cllr Akbar (Finance and Resources) Cllr T Robinson (Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care)	Carol Culley James Binks Tom Wilkinson	
Progress on Council Motions over last 12 months	To receive an update on the progress made in respect of motions that have been passed before Manchester City Council since the last update in March 2023.	Councillor Craig (Leader) Councillor Rahman (Statutory Deputy Leader)	Fiona Ledden	

Overview Report	The monthly report includes the recommendations monitor, relevant key decisions, the Committee's work programme and any items for information.	N/A	Scrutiny Support	
-----------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----	------------------	--

Items to be Scheduled

(Items highlighted in grey indicate that these have been included in the work plan of one of the above meetings).

(New items added are highlighted in blue)

Item	Purpose	Executive Member	Strategic Director / Lead Officer	Comments
There are currently no items to be scheduled				

Update to the Resource and Governance Scrutiny Committee and the Constitution and Nomination Committee on the report provided on 22 June 2023 and 12 July 2023

Local Elections 2023 action – Developing an Elections Outreach Pack and establishing an Elections Act Forum

- 1.1 The Electoral Services Unit presented a report to the Resource and Governance Scrutiny Committee meeting of 22 June 2023 and the Constitution and Nomination Committee meeting of 12 July 2023 to provide an update on the Elections Act and an overview of its impact at the 4 May 2023 local election. An action requested from those meetings was for the Electoral Services Unit to develop an engagement campaign throughout the summer as part of consultations on the polling district review (which has subsequently been delayed until summer 2024) and the annual canvass. This would include engaging with the likes of MACC and the Our Manchester VSCE Fund, the universities, Age Friendly Manchester, Breakthrough UK to reach disabled groups, the Council's Neighbourhoods service, homelessness services and the care and veterans' sectors to reach a wide range of communities and groups. Members also requested that further information on this be shared with councillors to distribute at events.
- 1.2 Over the summer, direct engagement has been made with a wide range of community sectoral groups (including those noted above) to discuss what type of information they may need on the Elections Act and elections in general. A detailed spreadsheet of contacts has also been gathered with support from the Communications Team and the EDU Team. More detailed engagement has also taken place with the Manchester Disabled People's Forum, with Age Friendly Manchester and senior Neighbourhoods and Communications officers. The Elections Team are presenting on the 29 August to the Corporate EDI Leaders Group to encourage internal dissemination and support external outreach of election core messages. All of this activity has assisted us in developing the type of material that would be useful in an Elections Outreach pack.
- 1.3 In conjunction with this, the Elections Team are discussing wider engagement activity with the Strategic Elections Lead Officer at GMCA. This will help complement activity for the GM Mayoral Elections and the UK general election, at which 4 of the 6 constituencies in Manchester will require close cooperation with Oldham, Rochdale, Tameside and Trafford Councils.
- 1.4 Following discussion with this wide range of stakeholders, an Elections Act / Outreach Forum is planned for 10 October 2023. This will launch a Manchester Elections Outreach Pack, seek support for the dissemination of ongoing core communications around elections in 2023/4, and allow stakeholders to feedback any needs and requirements they may have in supporting such activity.
- 1.5 In addition, the Elections Team are in contact with the chairs and coordinators of the CHEM Sounding Boards to present the Outreach Pack to them and seek their support for similar ongoing dissemination of elections materials. These meetings are also being planned for October and November.
- 1.6 The Elections Outreach Pack will include factsheets on the following areas:
 - The Elections Act – explaining existing and new duties of the Act.
 - Voter ID – explaining the types of ID required at a polling station and how to apply for a Voter Authentication Certificate.

- Accessibility and elections – explaining the equipment and materials to support disabled voters and those voters where English is not their first language.
- Equality issues and elections – explaining the support that is available to different parts of the community to support them in voting.
- Polling stations – explaining how voters find their local polling station, what the role of the Presiding Officer and Poll Clerks is and what type of support is offered at each station.
- Registration – explaining how voters can register for an election.
- New Parliamentary constituencies – explaining changes that will be in place for the next UK general election and the new constituencies in Manchester.

- 1.7 There will also be a generic PowerPoint presentation available on request to use for local groups. The factsheets will be placed on the 'Elections and Voting' section of the 'Council and Democracy' part of the Council's website. They will also be disseminated pro-actively to the groups in the Elections Act Forum. Further discussion is taking place with the Council's Neighbourhoods Teams to consider ways these materials can be actively used and disseminated through the many forums they engage with throughout 2024, and particularly before the combined local / mayoral election in May 2024 and the upcoming general election, whenever that is held.
- 1.8 All elected members will receive the Elections Outreach Pack in October 2023 at the same time as the Forum is held. Members are encouraged to disseminate it through their own local networks.
- 1.9 Whilst this engagement has taken place, the annual canvass continues throughout the summer and where possible, communication messages have been going out to voters to encourage electoral registration and to be aware of the new duties of the Elections Act, such as signing up for a Voter Authentication Certificate if required.
- 1.10 Whilst this activity, and the work undertaken within the annual canvass, is aligned to help our residents in making voting as accessible and straightforward as possible, they also aid effort to increase turnouts for the forthcoming local and mayoral elections and future polls going forward. Appendix 1 and 2 show turnouts for both elections in recent years.
- 1.11 Further updates and progress will be provided to either committee as requested.

Appendix 1**Recent turnouts in Manchester City Council elections**

Year	Turnout
2021	29.40%
2022	24.98%
2023	25.49%

Appendix 2**Recent turnouts in Greater Manchester Combined Authority Mayoral elections**

Year	Turnout
2017	28.90%
2021	34.74%

This page is intentionally left blank