

Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 6 February 2024

Present:

Councillor Hitchen (Chair) – in the Chair

Councillors Azra Ali, Appleby, Doswell, Ogunbambo, Rawson, Sheikh and Wills

Also present:

Councillor Midgley, Deputy Leader

Councillor Akbar, Executive Member for Housing and Development

Councillor Hacking, Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure

Karin Connell, Strategic Lead: Health Equity and Inclusion, Manchester Integrated Care Partnership

Eamonn O'Rourke, Interim Chief Executive Officer, Manchester Active

Anne Marie Errock, Business Development Lead, Manchester Active

Apologies: Councillor Good

CEESC/24/8 Interests

Councillor Ogunbambo declared a personal interest in item 7.

CEESC/24/9 Minutes

Decision: That the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 9 January 2024, be approved as a correct record.

CEESC/24/10 Annual Public Sector Equality Duty Report 2023/24

The committee considered a report of the Joint Director of Equality, Inclusion and Engagement which provided the draft Public Sector Equality Duty report prior to publication in March 2024 and provided an overview of the requirement for Manchester City Council to publish this.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- The Council's 3 Equality Objectives for 2020-2024;
 - Knowing Manchester Better
 - Improving Life Chances
 - Celebrating Our Diversity
- Progress made against these objectives through leadership and accountability systems and structures; governance and reporting; people, culture and behaviours; digital, knowledge and insight; and measures and motivators;
- The need for an intersectional approach to analysing and acting upon data;
- Previous reports to the committee on Communities of Identity and the LGBTQIA+ Deep Dive;
- How the Council's equality objectives and plans were governed through the Corporate Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Leadership Group; and

- The work of Making Manchester Fairer and Community Health Equity Manchester (CHEM).

Some of the key points and queries that arose from the committee's discussion included:

- Requesting clarification on statistics in the report relating to the percentage of households with at least one person who can speak English as their main language and the LGBT+ population in Manchester;
- The need for tangible case studies of how barriers were being tackled with marginalised groups such as black, Asian and minority ethnicities (BAME) and disabled people; and
- Welcoming the recognition of those experiencing homelessness, carers, care leavers, armed forces personnel and those living in poverty.

The Strategic Lead: Health Equity and Inclusion, Manchester Integrated Care Partnership, stated that the report provided an overview of what had been delivered by the Council and other stakeholders against the statutory equality duties. She highlighted how equality, diversity and inclusion had been embedded across the Council's work. She stated that good progress had been made and recognised that there was a scale and need that would be set out in new equality objectives for 2024-2028 to provide greater focus.

The Chair invited a member of the public to make representations to the committee. The member of the public requested clarification on how structural policies, processes and procedures that excluded sexual orientation and gender identity or expression, and that denies a person's identity, would be dismantled and where responsibility lay for compliance to the Public Sector Equality Duty when Council services were contracted out, with particular reference to GLL. They also highlighted the importance of wording, definitions, data integrity and monitoring. A full response would be provided outside of the meeting.

In response to a point raised by the Chair regarding statistics in the report, members were advised that this should read that English was not the main language for 97,192 residents. Of these, 75,760 (77.9%) could speak English well or very well, and 21,432 (22.1%) said they cannot. Further clarification on the LGBT+ population would be provided following the meeting.

The Strategic Lead: Health Equity and Inclusion, Manchester Integrated Care Partnership, stated that the Census was a useful source of information but that it had drawbacks. She highlighted that responses to some questions were not mandatory and that the Census took place at a time when students were not in the city. She stated that approximately 30,000 people were thought to be missing from the Census and commented that deep dives, like what the committee had recently undertaken into the LGBTQ+ community in Manchester, were useful in providing insights and lived experiences that the Census could not highlight.

In response to a query regarding case studies, the committee was informed that the report referred to the work of Making Manchester Fairer (MMF) and Community Health Equity Manchester (CHEM). The Strategic Lead: Health Equity and

Inclusion, Manchester Integrated Care Partnership explained that Sounding Boards with BAME and disabled representatives had been established through CHEM to feed into programmes of work where inequalities of access, experiences and outcomes existed. It was stated that examples of the work of Sounding Boards could be shared with the committee.

Decision:

That the committee

1. notes the report, and
2. looks forward to receiving a further update on progress against the equality objectives in the new municipal year.

CESC/24/11 Draft Equality Objectives 2024-2028

The committee considered a report of the Joint Director of Equality, Inclusion and Engagement which provided an overview of the approach to developing the Council's refreshed Equality Objectives for 2024-2028.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background to the Council's existing Equality Objectives for 2020-2024;
- How the Council meets its statutory equality duties;
- The approach to refreshing the Equality Objectives through building on and strengthening existing strategies, successes and other work;
- Progress made against current objectives;
- Rationale and associated actions for each proposed Equality Objectives for 2024-2028, which were:
 - Promoting inclusive employment and work
 - Promoting timely and proportionate community involvement and engagement
 - Delivering inclusive and accessible services.
- How these objectives would be delivered and monitored; and
- Next steps and timeline for the publication of the 2024-2028 Equality Objectives.

Some of the key points and queries that arose from the committee's discussion included:

- Welcoming the proposed new equality objectives;
- How the Council worked to foster good relations between those who shared protected characteristics and those who did not;
- How success would be measured, and requesting that the delivery plan be provided to a future meeting;
- Suggesting that the Council only enter into contracts with companies that share similar equality values or who sign up to the Council's equality objectives;

- When the socioeconomic disadvantage duty would be adopted by the Council;
- How success in reducing socioeconomic disadvantage would be measured and monitored;
- Welcoming plans for community engagement on the draft equality objectives;
- How trauma-informed work would be integrated with the objectives;
- How social mobility work could be embedded in North Manchester;
- Requesting statistics on the percentage of school leavers who were in care and were not in further or higher education, employment, or training 9 months after leaving school;
- The need to consider poverty and class, which were not mentioned in the report despite poverty cutting across many different characteristics and restricting access to employment; and
- When a further update could be provided to the committee.

The Head of Equalities stated that a whole-systems approach would be taken to developing the new equality objectives and that these would ensure that equalities were embedded in all strategic drivers across the Council. She stated that an intersectional approach would also be taken as the Council understood the layers of disadvantage within different groups and communities. The new equality objectives would build on the current three objectives to recognise successes and feedback from residents. She advised that the objectives would be strategically aligned and would reflect the commitments of the Making Manchester Fairer (MMF) programme, the Workforce Equality Strategy and the Work and Skills Strategy. Members were advised that the engagement process would expand on previous public engagement and to reach key communities.

The Head of Equalities explained that the draft equality objectives included inclusive employment and work; timely and proportionate community involvement and engagement; and delivering inclusive and accessible services. She stated that there would be a significant focus on metrics and measurements and a delivery plan was being developed.

The Head of Equalities advised that work to foster good relations between those with protected characteristics and those without had started under the current equality objectives. An example of this was the Council's involvement in and support of events which celebrated diversity and built awareness of different cultures in the city, such as Manchester Pride, Holocaust Memorial Day and Walk for Women. She stated that this would be continued under the new equality objectives to continue building good relations between different groups.

The Deputy Leader also stated that this work could link with the Community Cohesion Strategy to foster good relations and she recognised the need for this work to be cross-cutting across many Council services.

In response to a query regarding how success would be measured, the committee was advised that this could be undertaken through the equality impact assessment process. The Head of Equalities explained that the delivery plan was expected to be finalised in late March and this could be shared with the committee at a future meeting.

A member's suggestion that the Council only enter into contracts with companies that share similar equality values or who sign up to the Council's equality objectives was noted by officers.

The Head of Equalities acknowledged a member's point regarding integrating trauma-informed work into the equality objectives and explained that work was ongoing with the Human Resources and Organisation Development (HROD) team to create a learning and development programme across the wider equalities work and it was important to reference trauma-informed work and cultural humility within this.

In response to queries regarding socioeconomic disadvantage, the committee was advised that this would be addressed by building a culture of understanding around the disadvantages that different communities faced. Members were also informed that the Council's equality impact assessment process had been refreshed to have a greater focus on data and those involved in new policies or developments would need to be mindful of the local community and any disparities that residents may experience. The Strategic Lead: Health Equity and Inclusion, Manchester Integrated Care Partnership, stated that socioeconomic disadvantage in Manchester was one of the driving forces behind selecting employment as an equality objective as this was critical to addressing some of the issues caused by poor social mobility. She advised that there was substantial data around employment status and economic inactivity which could be broken down by locality and compared by ethnicity and disability. This was addressed within the Council's Work and Skills Strategy and provided an example of work with Bangladeshi women in Cheetham, Crumpsall and Longsight.

Officers acknowledged a point raised by the Chair regarding the need to consider poverty and class as a barrier to employment and social mobility and they would endeavour to incorporate this into the objectives and delivery plan.

In response to a query regarding how the committee could continue to monitor progress with this work, officers explained that a working group would be established to develop metrics and identify the best way to demonstrate the impact of this work. The City Solicitor suggested that June 2024 would be an appropriate time to provide an update, which the committee welcomed.

Decision:

That the committee

1. notes the report;
2. requests that a progress update be provided to the committee in June 2024, including the delivery plan; information on how success would be monitored; and information on the socioeconomic disadvantage duty;
3. requests further updates on a 6-month basis after June 2024;
4. requests further information on the percentage of school leavers in Manchester who were in care and were not in further or higher education, employment, or training 9 months after leaving school; and
5. recommends that further consideration be given to including poverty as a protected characteristic within the equality objectives.

CESC/24/12 Manchester's Sport and Physical Activity Strategy Annual Update

The committee considered a report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) which highlighted the annual progress made by Manchester Active in the development and achievement of the Manchester Sport and Physical Activity Strategy. It also provided an overview of the progress made using sport and physical activity to enable Manchester residents to be healthier and happier.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background to Manchester Active and the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy;
- The Strategy's vision, priority themes and enabling themes;
- Updates on walking and cycling;
- The Physical Activity Referral Service (PARS);
- Facilities and opportunities for young people and Holiday Activity Funding (HAF);
- Major sporting events held and scheduled to be held in Manchester;
- How residents are informed about sport, physical activity and health;
- An overview of completed projects that created new or improved existing built sports facilities; and
- Next steps.

Some of the key points and queries that arose from the committee's discussion included:

- Welcoming the promotional video and querying whether this could be displayed on advertising boards across the city;
- Highlighting positive developments in Withington parks and at Hough End Leisure Centre and House of Sport;
- The role of Neighbourhood Sports Officers;
- Noting statistics that 32% of children in Greater Manchester were inactive, and querying whether this included PE lessons in schools;
- What activities were offered to motivate and increase participation among children and young people;
- Take-up rates for free swimming;
- Whether free swimming was still offered to those aged over 60;
- Whether there would be any additional place-based activities offered through the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme;
- The impact on HAF if the government did not continue to provide the Household Support Fund (HSF); and
- How the Council and Manchester Active could improve access to sports and leisure facilities for those least able to afford it.

The Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure stated that Manchester Active played a strong and vital role in local communities and neighbourhoods in supporting the economy, reconnecting communities and rebuilding a stronger society that enabled residents to be healthier and happier. He stated that 2023 was a

landmark year for sport, physical health and activity in Manchester with over 25 major events held in the city. He commented that UK Sport would be providing £1.1m to the city and that Manchester retained its status as a global city of sport which would inspire positive change and ensure a legacy pathway for Manchester athletes to excel. He highlighted how the city had been named European Capital of Cycling for 2024, which would be a strong platform to secure additional funding and investment into cycling provision. The committee was also advised that over 20,000 children benefitted from the free Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme which delivered 150,000 meals. He also highlighted several other achievements.

The Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure acknowledged some challenges and areas for improvement, such as strengthening the digital platform to enable residents to find and easily access activity opportunities. He stated that activities to encourage residents to lead more active lifestyles would be intensified and that work would be undertaken to grow and enhance local health networks.

The committee also received a video presentation of Manchester Active's work and key achievements. In response to a question from the Chair regarding whether this could be presented on advertising boards across the city, the Interim Chief Executive Officer, Manchester Active, stated that a digital campaign was being developed with partners and that snippets of the video could be included in this.

The Interim Chief Executive Officer, Manchester Active acknowledged challenges with inactivity amongst children and noted that PE was not always followed through in the school curriculum. He stated that the HAF programme created a platform for children during school holidays to learn about activity. He advised that Manchester Active worked closely with other organisations to ensure that issues with inactivity were addressed in partnership and that there were also targeted activities in more deprived areas through Making Manchester Fairer and the Winning Hearts and Minds programme.

The Interim Lead for Leisure, Events and Specialist Markets recognised national and local gaps in activity amongst children and young people and stated that the Council and Manchester Active had increased the number of place-based initiatives and commitments. She commented that many local authorities no longer offered free swimming and that Manchester was proud to have retained this. The committee was advised that a successful marketing campaign had been undertaken to raise awareness of this offer and that subsidised swimming courses were also offered. The Interim Lead for Leisure, Events and Specialist Markets also highlighted how the Council extended the government's funding towards HAF to provide the scheme in every school holiday, which not every local authority did.

The Interim Lead for Leisure, Events and Specialist Markets acknowledged a focus on girls arising from the Active Lives Survey and explained that work was undertaken with stakeholders, such as schools and sports clubs, to address stereotypes and to keep up to date with new and emerging sports.

It was also confirmed that free swimming was offered to people 16 and under and over 60s.

The Interim Chief Executive Officer, Manchester Active explained that Manchester received £4.1m in funding for HAF, which was targeted through free school meals. He stated that this was delivered in collaboration with a number of partners in a range of locations across the city. He stated that the Council and Manchester Active had influence over where partners delivered activities and he endeavoured to work with the member for Higher Blackley regarding activities in his ward.

The committee was informed that the Household Support Fund had not been confirmed for 2025/26 and that this would be a significant loss to the Council and Manchester Active if not continued by the government. Assurances were provided, however, that Manchester Active would work with partners to ensure sustainability and would seek further funding streams to support the HAF scheme.

The Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure stated that inability to afford access to sport and physical activity programmes was the fault of the government as a result of 14 years of austerity.

The Interim Chief Executive Officer, Manchester Active stated that his organisation focused on how to impact areas where residents could not afford to access sport and leisure facilities. He cited the Winning Hearts and Minds programme in North Manchester as an example of free, targeted work with families who were unable to access sport and physical activities. He recognised that organisations needed to provide local communities with low-cost options and that Manchester Active could support and provide pathways for residents to access these. He gave an example of work with Sport England to provide approximately £83k to community sports clubs which could be used for equipment, maintenance and running free trials of activities for women and girls.

He also stated that the HAF programme enabled engagement with children and to create habits amongst them that could be continued. This work included providing healthy, low-cost recipes which could help to reduce reliance on cheaper, less healthy food. The Interim Chief Executive Officer, Manchester Active also explained that the HAF programme allowed organisations to gather information on where service users lived so that more targeted work could be undertaken. He explained that work was underway with FC United on a place-based, low-cost opportunity in Moston to support the Winning Hearts and Minds programme and that similar work was ongoing at Station South.

The Interim Lead for Leisure, Events and Specialist Markets acknowledged that the cost-of-living crisis had intensified inequalities across the city and explained that the consultation initially undertaken when developing the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy indicated that residents wanted free or low-cost activities. She stated that efforts to encourage walking and cycling would be intensified this year.

In response to a request from the Chair regarding bike libraries, the Interim Lead for Leisure, Events and Specialist Markets explained that a dedicated website for the European Capital of Cycling was now live and included information on where cycle libraries would be located.

Decision:

That the committee

1. notes the report;
2. requests that the Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure writes to the government to emphasise the importance of the Household Support Fund (HSF) in supporting the Council's Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme and to request that HSF be continued after 2024/25; and
3. requests that an update be provided on the timescale for rolling out bike libraries across the city.

CEESC/24/13 Community Events Fund 2023/24

The committee considered a report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) which provided an overview of the purpose of the Council's Community Events Fund (CEF) and included details on how it is administered, and an outline of events funded in the 2023-24 financial year.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background to community events;
- Criteria for receiving CEF;
- CEF was split into a Restricted Fund, for recurring and targeted annual events, and an Unrestricted Fund, which provided grants to support groups through the application process;
- An overview of each event in receipt of CEF, including how much funding was awarded;
- The community reach of the Caribbean Carnival, GobeFest, MACFEST and South Asian Heritage Month events, as previously requested by the Committee;
- Challenges currently facing the events sector; and
- Considerations that may influence the Council's approach to future funding for community events.

Some of the key points and queries that arose from the committee's discussion included:

- Why the Diwali Mela event did not meet the criteria for CEF;
- How the Council encouraged new groups to organise events and apply for CEF;
- Why a budget had been assigned to the Irish Festival when the total event budget and the CEF application request were still to be confirmed;
- What support and feedback was provided to organisations whose applications were rejected to help them improve future bids;
- Whether commitment was sought from major event holders such as Wythenshawe Games and Parklife Festival to provide funding for smaller community events;
- Welcoming the funding for the Wythenshawe Games, and querying whether this was a one-time grant or if it would be maintained year-on-year;

- Whether privately funded events gave the Council less leverage over and input into how parks and open spaces were used;
- How small events could be grown and encouraged whilst maintaining capacity for funding; and
- If the Council's Events team offered apprenticeships.

The Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure explained that the report focused on the Community Events Fund (CEF) and that it also highlighted the challenges faced by the events sector and how CEF had been allocated in 2023/24. He explained that a review of applications for 2024/25 was underway and that it would be interesting to see what would be brought forward by communities. He recognised that the level of funding available would be unable to support all applications and that the Council continued to develop commercial opportunities in parks and open spaces that would create additional funding streams to ensure the continued delivery of a vibrant community events programme.

In response to a query regarding the Diwali Mela, the Head of Events Development explained that this event could not take place due to operational issues and that some funding from 2023/24 had been carried over. This was accounted for in the service's budget to ensure that the Mela would be financially stable if it was able to operate again in future years.

The Director of Neighbourhood Delivery stated that the Council recognised the fantastic work undertaken by community groups and stated that many events were held independently of the Council. He explained that many community groups sought support and guidance on organising events in their local neighbourhoods and that queries regarding more major events were directed to the central Events teams. He also advised that there was further information and guidance for community groups on the Council's website.

The Head of Events Development explained that work was still ongoing to organise the Irish Festival in collaboration with the Irish Heritage Centre. This event would include a parade and the Council was working with organisers on cultural content for this. He stated that the financial and budgetary implications of this were still being worked through.

In response to a query regarding what feedback was provided when applications were declined, the Head of Events Development explained that three applications were declined in 2023/24 but the Diwali Mela was expected to return. He stated that, of the other two applications, one did not meet the criteria for CEF, but officers would work with the applicant to discuss how a future application could be strengthened. It was also explained that the Northern Fashion Week event did not meet the criteria for CEF as it was a large-scale event in a commercial venue.

The Interim Lead for Leisure, Events and Specialist Markets highlighted other funding sources for events such as the Neighbourhood Investment Fund. She also advised that the Parks Strategy included the commerciality of events held in parks, which was ringfenced for reinvestment. She acknowledged that inflationary costs had increased but that the Council was maintaining its revenue position and being innovative with its income generation.

It was also confirmed that there was a commitment within the service's budget to maintain funding for the Wythenshawe Games.

In response to a query regarding privately funded events and the Council's influence over these, the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) commented that the Council had ultimate decision-making power over how parks were used and, in consultation with ward members, it could reject applications to use parks if felt unfavourable.

The Director of Neighbourhood Delivery explained that the Council would continue to enable small events by working with partners, housing providers and organisations to support community groups and provide advice on developing events. He explained that the CEF was largely focused on events with a broader scope.

In closing the item, the Chair thanked officers for the help and guidance they provided to communities in organising events across the city.

Decision:

That the committee

1. notes the report, and
2. requests further information on whether apprenticeships were offered within the Events service.

CESC/24/14 2024/25 Budget

In opening the item, the Chair informed the committee that items 9 and 9a would be considered together and the committee considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer which provided an overview of the Council's updated budget position for 2024/25 and a report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) which provided a further update on the priorities for the services in the remit of this committee and detailed changes to the initial revenue budget options proposed by officers in November 2023.

Key points and themes within the reports included:

- Changes to the Council's budget position following the Autumn Statement and Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement;
- After the application of approved and planned savings, and the use of c.£17m smoothing reserves in each of the three years, the budget is balanced for 2024/25 with a budget gap of £29m in 2025/26 and £41m by 2026/27. This position assumed that savings of £21.4m would be delivered next year;
- Actions totalling £15m, to ensure that the Council had a balanced budget for 2024/25;
- Highlighting that the Council had undertaken careful long-term financial planning which involved making some difficult decisions around cost reduction and doing things differently but that a significant and growing budget gap remained from 2025/26;

- Full analysis and results of the public consultation would be reported to the Budget Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee meeting in late February;
- Next steps in the budget process;
- Providing an overview and information on the priorities of the Neighbourhoods directorate;
- The services under the remit of this committee;
- The base budgets for each service area for 2023/24;
- Noting that a temporary reduction in the annual £40k contribution to the security measures for the Christmas Markets whilst Albert Square is unavailable would be re-introduced once the markets return to Albert Square;
- The proposal to reduce the book fund budget by £30k had been removed following the committee's feedback in November 2023;
- An annual £2m contribution from the Capital Fund would be used to support the events commission and funded through the growth in retained business rates;
- Government grants and the income they provide;
- Workforce implications;
- Future opportunities;
- The indicative medium-term budgets by service area;
- The indicative medium-term budgets by type of spend/income; and
- A breakdown of the Community Safety budget, as previously requested by the Committee.

Some of the key points and queries that arose from the committee's discussion included:

- Commending the work of officers in setting a balanced budget for 2024/25;
- Expressing concern over the uncertainty of the continuation of the Household Support Fund from government;
- Welcoming the withdrawal of a previous proposal to reduce the book fund budget by £30k;
- Expressing concern over funding for homelessness prevention and support and recognising how central government failed to provide appropriate funding for areas most in need, like Manchester;
- Recognising that households in Manchester were still feeling the impacts of the cost-of-living crisis;
- How the Council would reassure residents that there would not be cuts to vital services, particularly for those most vulnerable;
- Expressing thanks to officers within the Homelessness service for their work in reducing the use of bed and breakfasts as temporary accommodation; and
- Recognising that local councils provide a lifeline for residents.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources introduced the item and stated that the Government's approach to the Local Government Finance Settlement had been chaotic and only announced just before Christmas. He said the final announcement when announced had resulted in a cut of 84% in the Services Grant and this equated to a £6.1m loss for Manchester. He stated that this had resulted in an outcry from local authorities and MPs from all political parties. He stated that this

situation needed to be understood in the context of fourteen years of austerity and Government funding cuts and unfunded pressures such as inflation and population growth.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources added that the Government then swiftly announced an additional £500m for Social Care, however Local Authorities were still facing a £4bn budget gap nationally, resulting in a number of Local Authorities serving a Section 144 notice and it was anticipated that more would follow.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources commented that despite this Manchester had set a balanced budget and had been achieved through diligent planning and management that had witnessed the strategic investment in preventative initiatives; using financial reserves prudently and investment in activities that were important for Manchester residents.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources stated that although Manchester had been able to deliver a balanced budget this year, the Council's financial position is expected to become even more challenging. The projected budget gap, even after using reserves for 25/26 was £29m in 2025/26 and rising to £41m by 2026/27.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources concluded by stating that the Government had continually failed to listen to Local Authorities.

The Deputy Leader stated that significant work had been undertaken to reduce the use and costs of bed and breakfasts as temporary accommodation for those experiencing homelessness and that officers were looking at other ways to reduce costs within the service. She highlighted that budgetary pressures were a result of political choices at a national level, such as Section 21 eviction notices, and increased demand as a result of the asylum and refugee crisis, which the government had failed to provide adequate funding to address. She called on the government to provide adequate financial support to local authorities to tackle homelessness.

The Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure also confirmed that a previous proposal to withdraw the book fund budget by £30k had been withdrawn, following expressions of concern from committee members' in November.

In response to a query, the Executive Member for Finance and Resources explained that the revenue budget gap for social care and homelessness had increased since 2010. He recognised that it was impossible to protect and mitigate all services and that the government had changed the funding formula to benefit more affluent areas.

Much of the committee's discussion focused on the failure of government to provide adequate funding for authorities like Manchester. The Chair particularly expressed concern over budgetary challenges within the Homelessness service and stated that it was a fundamental right for people to have a place to live. She expressed disappointment that the current Conservative government prioritised funding for more affluent areas and called for an immediate general election.

In closing the item, the Chair asked officers to convey the committee's gratitude to all Council staff for their work in delivering a balanced budget.

Decision:

That the report be noted.

CESC/24/15 Overview Report

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

Decision:

That the report be noted, and the work programme agreed.