

## **Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee**

### **Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 8 October 2024**

#### **Present:**

Councillor Hitchen (Chair) – in the Chair  
Councillors Azra Ali, Appleby, L Bell, Dar, Doswell, Iqbal, Ludford, Ogunbambo, Rawson, Sheikh and Wright

#### **Also present:**

Councillor Midgley, Deputy Leader  
Councillor Igbon, Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods

**Apologies:** Councillors Good and Whiston

#### **CESC/24/42 Minutes**

#### **Decision:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 September 2024 be approved as a correct record.

#### **CESC/24/43 Making Manchester Fairer – Communities and Power and Tackling Systemic and Structural Racism and Discrimination**

The committee considered a report of the Director of Communities and the Director of Equality and Engagement which provided an update on progress made with the themes 'Communities and Power' and 'Systemic and Structural Racism' of the Making Manchester Fairer Strategy.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Providing an introduction to Making Manchester Fairer, which is a five-year action plan aimed at reducing health inequalities in Manchester by addressing the social determinants of health, and specifically the themes that fall under the remit of this committee;
- Changes to Manchester's population and demographics over the last 20 years;
- Community Engagement Maturity Assessment, which was used to determine a set of quality standards for engaging with communities;
- Community-led initiatives and community development work;
- The work of the Race and Health Equity Education programme in 2023/24; and
- Community Health Equity Manchester (CHEM).

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

- What work would be undertaken in terms of training and behaviour change;

- How this work would reach marginalised communities rather than self-appointed gatekeepers;
- Suggesting that case studies would be useful for future reports;
- Engaging with hard-to-reach groups on healthcare and medical screening and if there were any targets for this;
- Requesting that the toolkit to promote best practice in terms of building community power be provided to the committee;
- Noting that intersectionalities were not included in the report and the need to the impact of poverty on a person's ability to engage with services and their community;
- How trauma-informed practice was built into this work;
- How a transparent process was ensured to hold organisations accountable for structural racism and how progress on this was reported;
- The influence of the State of the City report on this work; and
- How clear, positive messages could be communicated.

In response to members' queries, the Director of Communities acknowledged work was needed within the organisation to develop skillsets, knowledge and understanding of communities. She stated that this was not a standalone piece of work for the Making Manchester Fairer team and explained that she and the Director of Equality and Engagement had shared this information across the organisation and with partner organisations and continued to do so. Discussions were also underway with HROD to address knowledge gaps more systematically.

The committee was informed that CHEM brought together marginalised groups from a range of different communities of identity and that there was a mechanism through the Sounding Boards to engage with these groups. The Director of Equality and Engagement explained that CHEM helped to build trust and links with partners, and she expressed confidence in the ability of this mechanism to reach marginalised groups. The Director of Equality and Engagement also stated that CHEM worked with health providers to target communication about screening where there was identified need to make communities aware of how they could access these services. The Council and NHS had data monitoring systems and demographic data which could be married up to identify who was accessing screening services and CHEM helped to provide a community insight.

The Director of Communities agreed to provide the committee with the toolkit whilst noting that this was still in development. She commented that a number of different stakeholders would be involved in informing this work and that members would also be engaged. The Chair requested that all committee and elected members be invited to contribute to the development of the toolkit, which the Director of Communities supported.

In response to a query regarding intersectionalities, the Director of Equality and Engagement explained that the Sounding Boards were intersectional but acknowledged that it was difficult to collect intersectional data. She stated that work was ongoing on this and that developing an approach to inclusive qualitative data was a priority for the programme going forwards.

It was stated that poverty and how the Council would implement the socioeconomic duty was a key theme within MMF, along with trauma-informed practice.

The Director of Equality and Engagement stated that progress on tackling structural racism was assessed through data and the reduction of health inequality gaps. She explained that addressing racism had been prioritised with all partners and that the Council was developing quality standards for engaging with communities. The Race and Health Equity Education programme was highlighted as an example of work to address structural racism, and members were informed that this would be recommissioned.

In response to the Chair's query regarding State of the City reports, the Director of Communities explained that this links with the MMF work through communicating with and informing organisations on demographic data so that they understand how best to deliver services. The Director of Equality and Engagement concurred that this helped people to understand Manchester's demographic and the nuances between different wards and areas in the city as well as the importance of involving communities in co-designing solutions.

The committee was informed that co-design and co-creation work would be undertaken with community organisations and CHEM to listen to feedback and to understand how residents wanted to receive communication and messages. The MMF newsletter and podcast were highlighted, and members were also advised that the Council's Communications team had fundamentally altered the way in which messages were sent out to communities and they would continue to try to improve this.

The Director of Equality and Engagement endeavoured to relay a member's individual comments on the Winning Hearts and Minds community-led initiatives to the specific team.

In concluding the item, the Chair recognised that this was a vital and groundbreaking piece of work, which she looked forward to seeing the outcomes of.

**Decision:**

That the committee

1. notes the report;
2. requests that the toolkit to promote best practice in terms of building community power be provided to the committee; and
3. requests a further update on progress in 12 months' time.

**CESC/24/44 Building Stronger Communities Together Strategy 2023-26 Action Plans**

The committee considered a report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) which provided an update on the progress of the Building Stronger Communities Together Strategy 2023-26.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background to the strategy and its aims;
- The key priorities of the strategy
  - Relationships
  - Participation
  - Belonging
- The nine Building Stronger Communities Together behaviours and principles, which would be embedded into a programme of workforce development focused on social cohesion for staff and elected members to be delivered during October and November 2024 by the national Belong – Cohesion and Integration Network;
- Noting recent disorder and violence over the summer, which had accelerated this work to respond to the impact of this;
- Manchester would be a beneficiary of the government's Community Recovery Fund;
- Neighbourhood and place-based work to deliver the strategy in Moss Side, Hulme, Rusholme and Wythenshawe;
- Examples of activities and projects contributing to social cohesion across the city;
- Enablers to delivery, such as the Our Manchester VCSE Fund, MCRVIP and the Neighbourhood Investment Fund;
- The Communities and Power Board would provide oversight of the programme activity and progress in addition to an officers' coordination group; and
- Greater Manchester Combined Authority's (GMCA) quarterly Policing and Community Safety Survey would be used to understand and measure levels of social cohesion.

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

- How socioeconomic factors would be considered through this work;
- Welcoming comparisons with Greater London authorities and querying if there were any shared learning opportunities;
- Emphasising the need to target a range of areas within the city which were experiencing exclusion;
- The Community and Power Board;
- How the Policing and Community Safety Survey responses were gathered and whether this included information at ward-level;
- How to target those who seek to bring division to communities and the need for greater resources to do this;
- How the State of the City report helped to inform this work;
- How residents would be informed of changes and improvements as a result of the strategy; and
- How the picture of Manchester was collated and embedded into this work.

The Deputy Leader informed the committee that the strategy was launched in May 2024 and action plans had been developed to test and learn from key events, actions and engagement and to build on good practice. She highlighted that this was an

important strategy for the city and to foster social cohesion, which was especially relevant following recent protests and disorder over the summer.

The Prevent and Community Cohesion Coordinator commented that the programme of the strategy was in its infancy and would build cohesion in Manchester, solidify current work and provide members and partners with a narrative of what social cohesion looks like. She stated that learning and development sessions would be held, and she encouraged members to book onto these.

In response to members' queries, it was confirmed that socioeconomic factors would be considered through the strategy and action plans and the Director of Communities recognised the impact of poverty as a root cause of ill-feeling in some cases.

The Prevent and Community Cohesion Coordinator explained that regular meetings were held with colleagues across the Greater London authorities (GLA), and they would seek to learn how the GLA had achieved a response of 95% to the measure *"My area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together"*. The committee was informed of other learning opportunities, such as linking with other local authorities through the Belong Network and with other Core Cities with similar family units and demographics to identify how they measure cohesion.

In response to a query regarding the concentration of activities in Moss Side and Rusholme, the Director of Communities reiterated that these had been chosen as pilot areas and acknowledged that other areas also needed activities. She stated that the intention was to initially test activities in some areas to understand time, resource and capacity requirements.

The committee was informed that the Community and Power Board formed part of the governance arrangements for the strategy and would ensure that this linked with other activities and groups such as Area Youth Forums and people with lived experience.

The Director of Communities explained that the Policing and Community Safety Survey was conducted by Greater Manchester Combined Authority so only provided Manchester-specific responses which could not be broken down to individual wards. She stated, however, that the Performance, Research and Intelligence (PRI) and Communications teams were looking into reinstating a Residents Survey which would allow for a greater geographical breakdown in responses.

It was acknowledged that recent events and disorder in the summer had acted as a catalyst to national conversations about the resources needed to support communities and the Director of Communities expressed hope that additional resources would be forthcoming to help with this.

In response to a question from the Chair regarding the State of the City, it was stated that the annual report helped to underpin the data and demographic of the city which informed much of the strategy's objectives and work. Members were informed that significant work was ongoing with local insight and the State of the City report provided a snapshot of Manchester. Insight and intelligence were also gained through ward coordination and work with partners. It was also stated that Making

Manchester Fairer had a framework to ensure that progress was communicated with residents and partners.

The Director of Communities also offered to bring a further update report on this work in 12 months' time alongside an update on the Making Manchester Fairer work.

**Decision:**

That the committee

1. notes the progress on the delivery of the Building Stronger Communities Together Strategy and place-based activities along with the work that has supported community recovery post the incidents and events over the summer;
2. commits to attending the BSCT and social cohesion learning and development sessions for elected members and encourages elected members outside of the membership of this committee to also attend; and
3. welcomes the Director of Communities' offer of a further update report in 12 months.

**CESC/24/45 Preparations for Bonfire Night**

The committee considered a report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) which provided a summary of partnership operations to address seasonal increases in antisocial behaviour (ASB) associated with Bonfire Night.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- The number of ASB incidents involving fireworks reported between September and November had reduced year on year (with the exception of 2021) down to 266 in 2023 from a high in 2019 of 539, although it was acknowledged that incidents of ASB can go unreported;
- The Greater Manchester Bonfire and Halloween campaign led by Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue (GMFRS);
- Multi-agency operations had been developed and involved partners such as GMFRS, GMP, Council teams, housing providers and youth providers;
- Activities that would take place during each phase of these operations; and
- Community activities in parks.

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

- Antisocial behaviour related to Bonfire Night was happening earlier each year;
- What targeted work was undertaken to tackle premises selling fireworks to young people;
- What measures were in place to prevent the sale of illegal fireworks;
- What events were taking place in Heaton Park in lieu of an organised bonfire;
- Clean-up operations after Bonfire Night;
- How reporting methods were communicated to residents;

- What non-digital communications would be provided to residents;
- How cases of ASB were triaged by the Council and emergency services;
- The positive outcomes of the community activities in parks;
- What constituted an “*illegal*” bonfire;
- Highlighting the Lightopia event in Heaton Park in December; and
- Highlighting the health benefits of not hosting a bonfire, particularly for respiratory illnesses.

The Head of Compliance, Enforcement and Community Safety stated that incidents of ASB related to fireworks had been tracked for several years and there was a reduction year-on-year excluding 2022. She explained that a multi-agency response to ASB was in place and updated policing operational plans for North, South and Central Manchester had been received from GMP and elected members and partners had been contacted with information on local activities and to provide an opportunity to disclose further information and intelligence. This was a well-established approach which was helping to address ASB around Bonfire Night.

The Strategic Lead (Community Safety) advised that officers had acted on intelligence regarding underage sales of fireworks and encouraged members to share any information with the ASBAT and trading standards teams.

The Parks Strategy Manager stated that a considerable alternative community event offer was in place over the last two years since the decision was made not to host the bonfire at Heaton Park. 30 events had been held across all wards and parks in the city that would have traditionally held a Bonfire Night event and a significant number of these were held in Heaton Park.

In response to a query regarding clean-up operations after Bonfire Night, the Head of Compliance, Enforcement and Community Safety stated that waste and the build-up of bonfires were big factors in the multi-agency operation. She explained that the Compliance teams remained alert to any build-up of bonfires and were authorised to remove these in advance and particularly in areas of vulnerable land. Officers would also identify areas requiring clean-up after Bonfire Night and waste contractors and additional resources were in place for this.

Regarding communication to residents, the Strategic Lead (Community Safety) informed members that work had been undertaken with GMFRS and partners to formulate key messages and social media channels such as Facebook and TikTok would be utilised. Officers and partners would also be out within wards and communities to speak with residents, particularly in areas where there had been previous issues around Bonfire Night, and a letter had been drafted which explained how to be safe around Bonfire Night and how to report incidents. A communications kit consisting of posters and distribution packs had been developed as part of the GM-wide campaign and the Chair suggested these be circulated to places of high footfall, such as supermarkets and libraries. A member also suggested that a banner be added to the Council website for residents to quickly report ASB and illegal bonfires including by telephone and the Strategic Lead (Community Safety) endeavoured to raise this with the Communications team. The Strategic Lead (Community Safety) explained that ASB and illegal bonfires could be reported to the

Council by calling the switchboard on 0161 234 5000 and to the emergency services on 101 or 999 in an emergency.

The Head of Compliance, Enforcement and Community Safety highlighted that the majority of reports of ASB would be directed to the police who would triage cases, and the Council would liaise with partners if there was a build-up of reports of ASB to target resources appropriately.

Members were advised that trading standards wrote to businesses in the run-up to Bonfire Night to remind them of their obligations and the legalities around the sale of fireworks. Trading standards would also take action and undertake inspections and test purchases where intelligence was received.

In response the Chair's query regarding positive outcomes of the community activities, the Parks Strategy Manager highlighted a greater community family feel to events and how these helped to develop community groups and partners, such as the café operator in Cringle Park and Blossom at Wythenshawe Park. He also emphasised that these events had been well-received by the local community.

The Head of Compliance, Enforcement and Community Safety agreed to share a definition of an illegal bonfire following the meeting.

In concluding this item of business, the Chair thanked the Community Safety, ASBAT and Parks teams and partners for their work in keeping the community safe over Bonfire Night.

**Decision:**

That the committee

1. notes the report, and
2. requests further information on the events taking place in Heaton Park in lieu of an organised bonfire.

**CESC/24/46 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 and responses to previous recommendations. The committee also received information on temporary accommodation and the Homelessness Service's customer portal, in response to previous recommendations.

**Decision:**

That the report be noted.