

Economy and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 21 May 2024

Present:

Councillor Johns – in the Chair

Councillors Bano, Benham, Northwood, Taylor and Wills

Also present:

Councillor Rawlins, Executive Member for Clean Air, Environment and Transport

Councillor White, Executive Member for Housing and Development

Councillor Shilton Godwin, Ward Councillor for Chorlton Park

Apologies:

Councillors Abdullatif and I Robinson

ERSC/24/19 Minutes

The Chair thanked previous Committee Members, Councillors Hussain, Iqbal and Richards, who had not returned to the Committee this year, for their contribution over the previous municipal year and welcomed new Committee Members, Councillors Bano and Wills.

Decision

That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2024 be approved as a correct record.

ERSC/24/20 Economy Dashboard - Introduction to New Members

The Committee received a report of the Head of Performance, Research and Intelligence which introduced new Members to the most up-to-date Quarterly Economy Dashboard.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- The background to and purpose of the Economy Dashboard; and
- The current metrics within the Dashboard, including how these related to the priority areas within the new Economic Strategy.

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

- That longer-term trends and progress towards the objectives in the Council's strategies, for example opportunities being available to all residents, should be reflected in the Dashboard;
- That comparative data was useful and to want to see data comparisons with other cities across the UK and with other countries;
- That it would be useful to have data on people between 50 and 64 who were out of work, with a breakdown of the reasons for this as well as a breakdown by gender and ethnicity;

- Why had there been a reduction in business rates collection;
- Why were buses not included in the transport section;
- How the Housing Strategy was progressing to meet the needs of people in bands one to three;
- Was it possible to provide data in relation to wealth, not just income;
- How much work was still being done to follow up on the impact of the pandemic;
- Whether 35 data points was still a manageable number or too much information; and
- To welcome that the Dashboard had been aligned around the new Economic Strategy.

The Head of Performance, Research and Intelligence welcomed Members' feedback. In relation to tracking longer-term trends, he drew Members' attention to the State of the City report, while advising that his team would also look at what data could be included in the Dashboard to show the longer-term picture. He reported that they currently used data from comparator cities in the UK but would look into expanding this, including looking at what data was available for international comparators. The Director of Inclusive Growth advised that information on levels of poverty was largely based on information from the benefits system and the number of people who were out of work and that this could not be directly compared to data from other countries. The Head of Performance, Research and Intelligence informed Members that his service could undertake bespoke research on particular topics.

The Executive Member for Housing and Development informed Members that the Committee would be receiving an update on the Housing Strategy at a future meeting. He informed the Committee that approximately 700 affordable homes had been built, including hundreds that were available for social rent. He reported that there was a serious national housing crisis and that Manchester needed to build a lot more social, Council and affordable homes; however, he advised that the Council also needed to consider rightsizing and ensure that Council and social housing was used effectively, noting that of approximately 70,000 social rent homes, around 21,000 were under-occupied.

The Head of Performance, Research and Intelligence reported that an age, gender and ethnicity breakdown of data was produced where possible but that this could impact on the timeliness of data and that his team would look at some options to find a balance between providing this breakdown and providing the most up-to-date information. He reported that bus data was temporarily unavailable while the new bus franchising was embedding but that his team was working with Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) on this data and that this information would be returning to the Dashboard. He advised the Committee that there was limited data available on wealth but that it might be possible to include some of this in future.

In response to the question on Business Rates, the Director of Inclusive Growth reported that she would seek a response from the appropriate officer to share with the Committee. In response to a Member's comments, she advised that the increase in the number of young people who were not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) was likely to be due to capacity issues in post-16 education. In response to questions from the Chair, she reported that the current NEETS were a larger

percentage of a larger cohort of young people in this age group but that there were fewer young people who were unknown to the Council's services. She highlighted that young people who left their course after the start of the academic year, because they found it was not the right course for them, were then struggling to access an alternative course because so many courses were already at full capacity.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Head of Performance, Research and Intelligence reported that the Dashboard would evolve over the next 12 months, noting how the new Our Manchester Strategy would influence the content of the Dashboard. He acknowledged a Member's comments about the impact of the pandemic, advising that there was a lot of bespoke analysis taking place on particular aspects of this but that his team would look into this further.

Decisions:

1. To note the report.
2. To note that a response to the question on Business Rates will be circulated to Committee Members.

ERSC/24/21 Overview Report

A report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit was submitted. The overview report contained key decisions 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 Committee note the report and agree the work programme.