

Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 6 February 2020

Present:

Councillor Hacking - In the Chair

Councillors Andrews, Chambers, Collins, M Dar, Doswell, Douglas, Evans, Grimshaw, Hitchen and Rawson

Councillor N Murphy, Deputy Leader

Councillor Ollerhead, Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources

Councillor Rahman, Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure

Louise Harding, MCRactive

Apologies:

Councillors Kirkpatrick and Rawlins

CESC/20/8 Minutes

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2020 as a correct record.

CESC/20/9 Review of Advice Services in Manchester - Final Report and Recommendations

The Committee received a report of the Review of Advice Services in Manchester Task and Finish Group which presented the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the Review of Advice Services in Manchester Task and Finish Group. The Task and Finish Group had been established to consider the availability of advice services across the city, with a view to producing recommendations to be considered in the budget in the next financial year.

The Chair informed Members that the Executive Member for Adult Health and Wellbeing was unable to attend the meeting for personal reasons but had provided some comments on this work. A Member proposed that this item be deferred to the 5 March meeting in order that the Executive Member could attend, to which the Chair agreed.

Decision

To defer this item to the Committee's meeting on 5 March 2020.

CESC/20/10 The Council's Updated Financial Strategy and Budget reports 2020/21

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Executive and the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer, which provided an update on the Council's overall financial position and set out the next steps in the budget process, including scrutiny of the budget proposals and budget report by this Committee.

In conjunction to the above, the Committee also considered the Neighbourhoods Directorate Budget Report 2020/21 which provided the final budget proposals following the contents of the provisional Local Government Settlement received late December 2019 and feedback from scrutiny committees during January 2020.

The proposed 2020/21 budget reflected the fact the Council had declared a climate emergency by making carbon reduction a key consideration in the Council's planning and budget proposals.

The Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources outlined the national context within which the budget was being set, highlighting the significant decrease in funding to the Council since 2010.

A Member noted the statement within the update on the Council's overall financial position that, with regard to homelessness, the service had identified a potential increase in income of £1m in 2020/21 relating to Housing Benefit for temporary accommodation which would be available from Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) based on a small scale transfer of existing properties to be managed by Registered Providers (RPs) by end of March 2020 and increasing incrementally throughout 2020/21 and that this would reduce the net cost to the Council. She asked how much impact this incremental increase would have on the budget. The Head of Finance advised that he would circulate a response to this question to the Committee.

In response to a Member's question, the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) explained that the proposal to explore the establishment of a separate wholly owned company in relation to gallery exhibitions was a way of managing tax payments and would not impact on staff.

A Member asked whether the costs of the implementation of a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) in the city centre had been factored into the community safety budget. Deputy Leader Councillor Nigel Murphy confirmed that it had but added that there would not be any additional resources for the implementation of the PSPO and its introduction was about using existing resources in the best way.

In response to a Member's question, the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) provided an overview of the costs associated with Bereavement Services and offered to provide a breakdown of the costs, if Members were interested.

The Chair referred back to the Committee's comments when the budget had been considered at its January meeting, highlighting Members' view about the importance of funding work to address anti-social behaviour. The Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) informed Members that funding for the Anti-Social Behaviour Team had been increased in 2018/19 and that this level of funding was being maintained.

Decision

To re-iterate the Committee's comments from its 9 January meeting, supporting the proposals while emphasising the importance of funding work to tackle anti-social behaviour.

CESC/20/11 Equality Impact Assessments

The Committee received a report of the City Solicitor which reviewed a selection of the Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) produced in support of the Council's business planning process for 2019/2020. It outlined the context of why the Council undertook EIAs and some of the key themes emerging from the business priority-related analyses produced in the last year. It also described changes to the Council's approach to business planning for 2020-21, and the implications for how equality impacts would be considered within the plan and how the process of producing EIAs would be managed moving forwards.

The report noted that EIAs would be produced if actions arising from the Council's Climate Change Action Plan had a disproportionate impact on certain communities. The plan would recognise that climate change would have differential impacts on communities across the city, for example in terms of poor air quality and more frequent incidences of extreme weather.

Officers referred to the main points and themes within the report which included:

- Update on 2019-20 EIA Activity;
- Refreshed approach to business planning and EIAs; and
- Strengthening the approach to EIAs.

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

- That an EIA had not been completed for the Peterloo Memorial and whether lessons had been learnt from the mistakes that were made in that case;
- Request for further information on the EIA process, including how officers were made aware of it and whether EIAs were monitored by the Equalities Team;
- The timing of EIAs in relation to when decisions were taken, including in the case of the proposed Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) for the city centre;
- The importance of having a framework for EIAs setting out when they should be completed and what they should include and how Members could access the EIAs;
- That levels of deprivation were not included in the EIAs; and
- That EIAs should focus on having a positive impact rather than solely on minimising the negative impact on particular groups.

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager acknowledged that an EIA had not been completed in relation to the Peterloo Memorial and informed the Committee that work was taking place to safeguard against similar problems in future. He advised the Committee that he would provide them with further information on this.

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager informed Members that EIAs were part of the Project Initiation Process for Council projects but that this practice was not always fully embedded in the process and one of the challenges for his team was to address this.

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager confirmed that an EIA had been produced for the city centre PSPO and was expected to be signed off before a decision was taken. He agreed that EIAs should be completed before decisions were taken and reported that his team needed to have influence across the organisation to ensure that this happened. He advised that the best practice model was to complete the EIA at the earliest stage to identify any issues and give the relevant service the opportunity to adjust the proposal so that either the final proposal did not have this disproportionate impact or, if that was not possible, so that decision-makers could take this information into account when making their decision. The City Solicitor advised that, as the Lead Officer for Equality within the Senior Management Team, it was part of her role to use her influence to ensure that this analysis was prioritised and factored into decision-making and that she expected her colleagues and peers to ensure that this was being done within their Directorates.

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager informed the Committee that the part of the Equality Act 2010 which would have addressed socio-economic disadvantage was never enacted and that it had previously been decided not to include it in the Council's EIAs on this basis; however, he advised that this would be given further consideration as part of the review of the EIA Framework. He advised Members that there was also an opportunity to make the process more meaningful and to engage with key stakeholders over this.

Decision

To note the report and to ask the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager to consider the comments made by Members.

CESC/20/12 Manchester Playing Pitch Strategy

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) which provided an update on the Manchester Playing Pitch Strategy and Site Action Plan.

The report noted that delivery of priority projects identified in the Playing Pitch Strategy and Site Action Plan would contribute to achieving the zero-carbon target for the city and that projects would be subject to their individual business case and agreed funding strategy.

The main points and themes within the report included:

- Background and context;
- Governance;
- Study area;
- Site Action Plan update;
- Supply and demand update;

- Short-term action plan; and
- Investment opportunities.

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

- Concern about playing pitches being lost, for example to new housing developments, and what was the Council doing to address this;
- Concern at the level of response from Ward Councillors to the individual ward plans they had been sent;
- Plans for increased access to outdoor floodlit tennis courts;
- Whether the planned 17 new non-turf cricket pitches would be spread across the city and to question the different pricing for Further Education (FE) Institution-affiliated clubs compared to the price charged to non-FE-affiliated young people;
- Concern that local young people were unable to access playing pitches in their area due to block bookings by clubs;
- How under-represented groups could be supported to access Sport England's Community Asset Transfer Fund; and
- That some pitches and associated facilities, such as changing rooms, were in a poor condition and that it was important to address this.

The Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure advised the Committee that the Strategy was committed to protecting playing pitches and he offered to discuss with the Member his concerns about the future of specific playing pitches in his local area. The Member requested that the Executive Member arrange a meeting to discuss this, inviting other relevant Ward Councillors and Louise Harding from MCRactive. Louise Harding outlined the process for dealing with applications to build on land where there was a playing pitch, advising that she would be consulted and would object to the application and that, if the developer wanted to proceed, they would have to submit a mitigation for the loss of the playing field in consultation with the relevant stakeholders.

The Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure agreed that it was important for Ward Councillors to engage with this area of work and advised that he would send another reminder to all Members to ask them to provide feedback on the plans for their ward.

Louise Harding advised the Committee that there was demand for outdoor floodlit tennis courts across the city but, at present, the Council was waiting for an investment strategy from the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) which it could consider. She informed Members that the new cricket pitches would be located across the city and offered to provide further details of this and of the pricing structure. The Chair asked that consideration be given to how young people could be encouraged to use the facilities by removing any bureaucratic obstacles, such as needing to be FE-affiliated to receive a better rate. The Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure informed Members that a range of discounts and offers, such as free swimming, were available to young people and he offered to provide further information in a future report.

Louise Harding advised the Committee that her understanding was that Manchester clubs were given priority when booking pitches but that she would speak to the operators about the booking process. She informed Members that there was capacity to support groups seeking Community Asset Transfers. The Chair commented that the Committee would be receiving a report on the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Infrastructure Service at its next meeting and advised that he would ask that information on the support available to groups seeking a Community Asset Transfer, and whether this was included in the infrastructure contract, be included in this report.

The Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure agreed that the condition of some pitches needed to be improved and advised that the Strategy included a focus on investing in existing provision which had not received any investment for many years. In response to a Member's question, he advised Members that Wythenshawe Park have a 10-year development plan and that plans for how to sustain the Wythenshawe Games could be incorporated into this.

Decision

To note the report.

CESC/20/13 Delivering the Our Manchester Strategy

The Committee received a report of the Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure which provided an overview of work undertaken and progress towards the delivery of the Council's priorities as set out in the Our Manchester Strategy for those areas within the portfolio of the Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure.

The main points and themes within the report included:

- Widening access and participation;
- Culture;
- Zero carbon and the climate emergency;
- Parks;
- Young people; and
- MCRactive.

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

- To thank the Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure for his work;
- Questions on behalf of a member of the public regarding work to address climate change;
- Request for further information on the successful bid to the Home Office "Libraries of Sanctuary" project, including more detail on what this was, how much funding had been awarded and the timescales;
- Request for further information on the new libraries post funded by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) which would manage a project to reduce digital exclusion in the city, including how much funding had been received, whether it was a full-time post and how long the post would be funded for; and

- What else could be done to widen access and participation in libraries, galleries, culture and leisure.

The Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure outlined the work HOME had been doing to address climate change. The Chair recommended that the Member send the questions from the member of the public to the Executive Member for him to respond.

The Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure reported that he would provide the Member with a response to her questions on the funding from the Home Office and the GMCA outside of the meeting.

The Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure reported that access and participation could be increased by changing people's perceptions that some activities or events were not for them and by improving communication. He informed Members about the three online platforms which were due to be launched the following month to inform Manchester residents about cultural activities, sport and leisure activities and activities for young people that were available in the city. He advised the Committee that some of the barriers to participation included transport, socio-economic background and affordability and that these would take time to address but that there was a willingness across the sector to do this. A Member emphasised the importance of ensuring accessibility for people from all socio-economic backgrounds, including ensuring that information was not only available online. The Executive Member confirmed that information was shared using a range of methods and reported that events were being held in wards, rather than just in the city centre, to better engage with local communities.

Decision

To note the report.

CESC/20/14 Overview Report

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

Decision

To note the report and agree the work programme.