

Economy Scrutiny Committee – District Centres Subgroup

Minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2019

Present:

Councillor Shilton Godwin – in the Chair
Councillor Hughes

Councillor Richards, Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration
Councillor Sheikh, Assistant Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration
Councillor Karney, Ward Councillor for Harpurhey
Councillor White, Ward Councillor for Old Moat

Dr Steve Millington, Institute of Place Management (IPM), Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU)

Apologies: Councillors Connolly, Kirkpatrick and Madeline Monaghan

ESC/OSG/19/01 Minutes

The Head of City Policy informed the Subgroup that an initial meeting had taken place the previous week with a range of stakeholders to progress the Chorlton District Centre report. Dr Steve Millington from the IPM advised Members that the report would take approximately two or three months to produce.

The Head of City Policy further informed the Subgroup that, following agreement at the previous meeting, discussions were currently ongoing with local Members to arrange another meeting with stakeholders in Gorton. Dr Millington advised that he would be happy to brief Neighbourhood Officers with regards to this. The Chair expressed her gratitude for this offer, commenting that this had been well received prior to other events.

Decision

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 19 December 2018.

ESC/OSG/19/02 Vital and Viable Neighbourhoods - Place Management Pilots Harpurhey District Centre Report

The Subgroup considered the report of the Strategic Director (Development) that provided the Subgroup with an update on progress with the District Centre Pilot projects that were being progressed by the IPM at MMU, with the support of the Council. The Place Management Pilots were a key aspect of the work programme overseen by the District Centres Subgroup, and were considering new opportunities to engage local stakeholders and enhance the quality of Manchester neighbourhoods.

The report, which was accompanied by a presentation, summarised the outcomes of the Harpurhey Place Management Pilot, which had reached the final report stage, and provided a brief update on other work.

Dr Millington referred to the main points and themes within the report and presentation which included: -

- Providing the background and the approach adopted to the Place Management Pilots;
- Information on the workshop held to inform this work that had included participation from a range of local stakeholders;
- An analysis of the footfall data that had been collated, noting the importance of the market and the sense of local community;
- Noting that sharing of the footfall data with partners was crucial to influence change and help inform a stakeholder group, providing advice on how this group could operate to influence change;
- Benchmarking findings and recommendations arising, noting that promoting the centre would not be effective unless issues regarding appearance and perceptions of safety were addressed;
- An overview of the findings and recommendations, noting the value recognised of co-locating public services with the commercial activity in the centre, generating both visitors and a base of workers to generate footfall;
- As the reports for each centre were produced, there would be a range of actions proposed for each centre;
- Following publication of each report, it was proposed that the council would review recommendations and consider whether any short term actions should be implemented; and
- Once the reports for all four pilots were available, it was proposed that the council review all recommendations and determine key general policy and practice to be considered across the city.

Councillor Karney, Ward Member for Harpurhey said that he and his fellow ward councillors welcomed the report and they were not surprised by the spike in footfall at Christmas. He reported that the market was a very important feature of the local community that provided an opportunity for local people to meet, and that, in the challenging economic climate, the market and district centre remained best value for local residents. He stated that the residents of Harpurhey were fiercely proud of their area and a strong local community spirit was evident. He advised that more needed to be done to address the reputation of the area, commenting that the press did not report the many positive stories that existed and seemed to want to focus their reporting on the negative aspects. He further commented that it was important to establish good and positive relationships with the key businesses in district centres, noting that some were better at engagement than others.

The Assistant Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration commented that local neighbourhood teams should utilise social media to promote positive stories, noting that this had been used to good effect in the Levenshulme area. Councillor Karney stated that caution should be given to relying solely on social media as a medium for communicating with residents and consideration needed to be given as

to how local stories were cascaded to residents to provide a 'positive mirror' for communities.

The Strategic Director (Development) commented upon the evidenced success of Harpurhey and the positive outcomes this had delivered for the local area, noting that this had been achieved in large part by the decision taken to locate public services in the area. He advised that Manchester should use the benefits of this model and the compelling evidence to influence and encourage a range of public sector partners, such as Health Services and Registered Housing Providers to locate in district centres and support neighbourhoods. He commented that the work of the Subgroup and the recommendations that arose could inform future policy decisions in relation to this.

The Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration noted the good work and positive engagement that had been generated through the production of the reports and advised that consideration needed to be given as to how the recommendations could be progressed to capitalise on this activity. The Chair acknowledged this comment and the importance of capitalising on this important work, including delivering quick wins. She advised that the learning needed to be shared amongst stakeholders, and suggested that this could include local neighbourhood policing teams and the managers at Biffa, which was responsible for the cleanliness of the streets.

Decisions

1. To note the report.
2. To recommend that the Neighbourhood Teams capitalise upon the findings of the District Centre reports and progress this work, alongside local councillors, to influence change.
3. To review the progress of this work in the new municipal year and identify any lessons which can be learnt.

ESC/OSG/19/03 Future High Street Fund

The Subgroup considered the report of the Strategic Director (Development) that provided background information on the Future High Streets Fund that had recently been established by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. It set out the process that it was proposed to follow in responding to this funding opportunity and asked for the Subgroup's endorsement of this approach.

The Strategic Director (Development) referred to the main points and themes within the report which included: -

- Background to the fund and the bidding criteria, noting that Manchester could make up to four submissions;

- The rationale for submitting the first funding bid for Withington District Centre, noting that Withington had been selected as it was a very strong example of the Our Manchester approach; and
- Outlining Manchester's proposed approach.

Councillor White, Ward Councillor for Old Moat, addressed the Subgroup and stated that Withington was within a conservation area with a great heritage and the ambition of the bid was to ensure it had a great future also in these challenging times. He stated that a range of stakeholders in the local community were engaged in this process, including the Christie Hospital, the local MP, community groups and the Age Friendly Team. He informed the Subgroup that a workshop had been arranged for stakeholders, with the support of the IPM, to help inform the funding submission.

Dr Millington informed the Subgroup that an event had recently been held at MMU to articulate and provide information on the Supplementary Guidance to local authorities which provided more detail on the eligibility criteria for the first round of the Fund and set out how expressions of interest would be assessed by the government department. He commented that the intention of the fund was to deliver a legacy and that he would circulate the information that had been delivered at the event.

The Assistant Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration reported that he welcomed the decision for Withington to submit a bid, noting that the lessons learnt from this experience would inform future submissions.

The Neighbourhoods Team Manager South informed Members that this fund presented an opportunity for positive community engagement with developers and local businesses to influence and drive improvements on the local high street. He commented that, whilst Withington high street did not have the high number of vacant units which some areas had, there was a significant number of premises that were underused and this was an opportunity to review this.

The Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration reported that Withington had demonstrated a clear commitment to a partnership approach and that this had informed the decision to nominate Withington for the bid. She stated that challenges would arise in identifying other areas to nominate due to the stated criteria and the issue of match funding.

The Chair noted that the work and the information that had been collated on district centres would help inform the decisions to identify other areas for nomination for funding and contribute to the funding submissions.

Decisions

1. To note the report.
2. To note the intention to make submissions to both rounds of the fund.
3. To note the intention to submit a bid for Withington District Centre in 2019 and to initiate work to develop a further bid for the funding round expected to take place in 2020, informed by the findings of the work on District Centres.

ESC/OSG/19/04 Review and Reflections

The Strategic Director (Development) reported that the work of the Subgroup presented an opportunity to demonstrate how the 'Our Manchester' approach worked, noting the importance of building local capacity in neighbourhoods to harness and progress this work by involving a range of partners and stakeholders, and that good practice and the lessons learnt to date should be implemented across all district centres. He stated that consideration needed to be given as to how this activity was to be corporately prioritised and resourced.

The Head of City Policy stated that Northenden provided a positive example of where local people and stakeholders had taken ownership of this activity to drive improvement in their neighbourhood. He further commented that the recent workshop had challenged many assumptions regarding what residents could influence in their locality and this was a very important and powerful message. The Chair commented that the benefits of what could be achieved via this approach needed to be made clear to residents and stakeholders so that they actively engaged with the process.

The Chair commented that it was important to understand the role of local Members and officers to facilitate and empower residents and other stakeholders to take ownership of this work by sharing information and assisting people to analyse and understand the data collected. She suggested that a training course should be designed and delivered to Neighbourhood Teams so that they could effectively communicate this area of work with residents and other stakeholders in a meaningful way.

The Chair further commented on the important function of markets, noting that this had been identified in a number of reports and work should be undertaken with Manchester Markets to support this work and recognise their key role in driving the local economy. The Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration acknowledged this comment and stated that she would be meeting with the Executive Member for Schools, Culture and Leisure to take this forward.

The Chair stated that, following the benefits evidenced in Harpurhey, the Council should seek to use its influence to encourage public sector partners to locate to district centres. She further commented that consideration needed to be given to developing shared working spaces, including utilising the accommodation space above shops.

Dr Millington informed Members about a project called Area Based Collaborative Enterprise (ABCE) Cities, which was taking place in partnership with the Council and linked into a network of other European cities. He advised Members that this project would look at other district centres and areas for intervention. The Chair confirmed that she would be attending the stakeholder group meetings for this project.

The Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration advised that consideration should be given as to what the Council could do in terms of visual signage and branding to clearly identify district centres.

Decisions

1. To recommend that the good practice and lessons learnt from the work so far be shared and applied across all district centres.
2. To recommend that a training course be designed and delivered to Neighbourhood Teams to enable them to engage with residents and stakeholders to support this activity.
3. To recommend that the Council use its influence with a range of public sector partners to encourage them to locate their services into district centres.
4. To recommend that the Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration and the Executive Member for Schools, Culture and Leisure discuss how Manchester Markets can contribute to this work, in recognition of the key role they play in driving the local economy.
5. To recommend that consideration be given as to what the Council could do in terms of visual signage and branding to clearly identify district centres.

ESC/OSG/19/05 Terms of Reference and Work Programme

The Chair informed Members that the report on Under-served Communities and the Chorlton District Centre report would be considered in the new municipal year.

The Chair noted that the Subgroup would reconvene in the new municipal year and the date and time of the next meeting would be circulated to Members.

Decision

To note the Terms of Reference and agree the Work Programme subject to the above comments.