

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Economy Scrutiny Committee
District Centre Subgroup – 11 September 2018

Subject: Vital and Viable Neighbourhoods / Place Management Pilots
- Progress Report

Report of: Strategic Director, Development

Summary

This report provides the Subgroup with an update on progress with the four District Centre Pilot projects that are being progressed by the Institute of Place Management (IPM) at Manchester Metropolitan University, with the support of the Council. The Place Management Pilots are a key aspect of the work programme overseen by the District Centres subgroup, and are considering new opportunities to engage local stakeholders and enhance the quality of Manchester neighbourhoods.

The report summarises the outcomes of the Northenden Place Management Pilot (which has reached final report stage), provides an update for Gorton and Harpurhey (which are at pre-report stage) and sets out the proposed next steps for the Chorlton pilot.

Recommendations

To note the report and to provide any comments on the work to date.

Wards Affected: Chorlton, Chorlton Park, Gorton and Abbey Hey, Harpurhey, Northenden

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Background documents (available for public inspection): None

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Previous reports to this subgroup have set out the work programme the council has endorsed, which aims to consider the most effective policy approach the council and its partners can take to promote successful centres in Manchester. The work programme has been developed alongside the Institute of Place Management (based at Manchester Metropolitan University), a body with particular interest in the study and promotion of place management techniques.
- 1.2 A core aspect of the work programme comprises Place Management Pilots in four of Manchester's centres (Chorlton, Gorton, Harpurhey and Northenden). These are exercises that bring together a centre's stakeholders, bring to their attention key evidence relating to activity and character of the centre and agree the actions that could be most beneficial for the centre's performance. There are aspects of this process that are clearly aligned with the Our Manchester approach. The council has a key role to play, but the degree to which an ongoing programme of activity can be agreed and delivered is a function of the level of commitment from other stakeholders. This report sets out the approach taken to the Place Management Pilot and explains the progress made in each centre.

2.0 Manchester Place Management Pilots – Update

Approach to the Place Management Pilots

- 2.1 Although each centre is different and will warrant a different management approach, there has been a common overall format to the Place Management Pilots, reflecting the IPM's experience in other locations. The Place Management Pilots comprise an initial assessment by the IPM, a stakeholder workshop and a final report of recommendations. The initial assessment considered footfall data, collected through counters installed in each of the centres, and an audit undertaken through a site visit.
- 2.2 For the workshop, it was considered important that an appropriate range of stakeholders were invited. Consideration was given to representatives of local businesses (in particular, local traders and land owners), active community groups, service providers and residents. Lists of invitees were prepared through engagement with the council's Neighbourhood Teams and local members. The workshop itself would take place over the course of two hours. It comprises an initial presentation of the IPM's academic research into place management of centres. The two key pieces of research are the High Street 2020 project (focused on understanding the issues that can determine a centre's success) and Bringing Big Data to Small Users, which sought to bring information regarding centre performance (in particular footfall) to local people so that they are able to make informed decisions on collective place management. This section provided background for workshop attendees, and began generating thought and discussion over the centre's performance.

- 2.3 Next, attendees were asked to work in groups to identify key characteristics and strengths of the centre, which would then be fed back to the wider group. This gave a good sense of the overall range of perceptions of the centre, including the key strengths and opportunities that could provide a basis for action to improve centre performance.
- 2.4 The final section of the workshop urges attendees to consider their role in effecting the changes identified. There is a tendency to assume a lack of control across stakeholders, but the IPM research suggest found that, particularly where stakeholders can work effectively as a collective, considerable influence can be exercised at the local level. For example, footfall data may reveal that the centre has visitors at times when most premises are closed. Whilst single traders may feel unable to effectively influence trading hours, acting as a group the traders are the only stakeholders able to address this issue.
- 2.5 Following the workshop, the IPM prepare a report for the centre. This summarises the assessment undertaken by the IPM and the outcomes of the workshop. It also includes a set of recommendations for further action. Based on a conceptual framework developed through the High Street 2020 project, these are organised around the ideas of:
- Repositioning – realigning a centre’s function based on an understanding of its market position;
 - Reinventing – focusing on changing perceptions and image for a centre;
 - Rebranding – using measures around branding and public relations to engage more effectively with a centre’s catchment; and,
 - Restructuring – seeking to change the physical and governance characteristics of a centre.
- 2.6 At the present time, the workshops have been held in Northenden, Gorton and Harpurhey. The report for Northenden has also been prepared, and is available as an appendix to this report. The pilots for Gorton and Harpurhey are at a less advanced stage and reports for these centres are not yet available, but will be brought to the subgroup (and shared with attendees) once they are. Work is currently ongoing to organise the workshop in Chorlton, and it is hoped that it will be possible to hold this before Christmas.

Northenden Place Management Pilot

Place Management Pilot Workshop

- 2.7 The first Place Management Pilot took place in Northenden. The workshop was held on the evening of 6 March 2018 at the Britannia Hotel on Palatine Road.
- 2.8 The event was attended by 30 people. Attendees included:
- Council members (three members, although one was yet to be elected at the time of the workshop);

- Council officers from the Neighbourhood Team, Policy Partnerships and Research and Work and Skills;
- An officer from TfGM
- Local residents;
- Local traders;
- Representatives of the Northenden Civic Society;
- Representatives of the Northenden Neighbourhood Forum.

2.9 The discussion at the workshop highlighted a range of views about the centre, including assessments of the key issues. It was apparent that a substantial amount of activity already took place to promote the centre and activity within it. It was also clear that many local stakeholders take considerable pride in the centre.

Northenden Place Management Recommendations

2.10 Following the workshop, the IPM prepared a report that summarises its own assessment of the centre and the views expressed through the workshop. The report also includes a set of recommendations for future actions that could enhance place management in Northenden, including ‘quick wins’ and longer term measures. The recommendations can be reviewed in detail through the report (appendix A), but are summarised here.

Theme	Overview of recommendations
Repositioning	<p>Quick win – improve local understanding of the footfall data.</p> <p>Build on green space to differentiate Northenden, and look to improve evening and leisure economy to provide convenient offer for local community.</p>
Reinventing	<p>Quick win – improve signage linking the centre to nearby green space and riverside.</p> <p>Improve awareness of green resources, including Trans Pennine Trail.</p> <p>Use of planters and In Bloom events to improve appearance of Northenden.</p> <p>Organise community events to make use of the green space (the recent example of the Northenden Boat Race is evidence that there is already a significant level of activity in Northenden).</p>
Rebranding	<p>Quick win – develop branding/marketing focusing on Northenden’s location on the banks of the Mersey.</p> <p>Encourage stakeholder engagement to develop a stronger Northenden brand (using the existing Heron brand as a starting point). Online emphasis could help manage costs.</p>
Restructuring	<p>Quick win – establish community stakeholder group to oversee centre activity and governance</p> <p>Capitalise on engaged stakeholders.</p> <p>Organise regular stakeholder meetings, and use these to share footfall data.</p>

Gorton Place Management Pilot

Place Management Pilot Workshop

- 2.11 The workshop for the Gorton Place Management Workshop was held in Gorton Library on the evening of 14 March 2018. The workshop was attended by 10 people, including:
- Members of the council (two local members attended)
 - Council officers from the Neighbourhood Team, Policy Partnerships and Research and Work and Skills;
 - An officer from TfGM
 - Local traders;
 - Local community representatives
- 2.12 The report for this pilot is yet to be finalised. However, points that were made during to workshop related to the lack of a clear centre within Gorton, partly due to the significant presence of Hyde Road, and the emergence of an increasingly diverse local catchment, which could present an opportunity for services within the centre.

Harpurhey

Place Management Pilot Workshop

- 2.13 The workshop for the Harpurhey Place Management Pilot was held on the afternoon of 25 July 2018 at the Manchester Youth Zone. For this workshop, it was felt that the stakeholder focus should be on centre operators, including the centre management company, traders and local public services. However, a separate event was organised to engage the wider local community (particularly residents). The workshop was attended by 12 people, including:
- Council officers from the Neighbourhood Team, Policy Partnerships and Research, Libraries, the Harpurhey District Office and Community Safety;
 - Local Traders
 - The Manchester Youth Zone
 - Northwards Housing
- 2.14 As with Gorton, the final report for Harpurhey is not yet available. Some of the initial views expressed at the workshop, though, recognised that the range of local services were well- matched to the local catchment, and highlighted the value of co-locating public services (the library, college, youth zone and council office) with the commercial activity in the centre, generating both visitors and a base of workers to generate footfall.

3.0 Conclusion

- 3.1 The three place management pilot workshops carried out to-date have illustrated the diversity of Manchester's centres. Whilst Northenden is clearly

supported by a local community with considerable interest in its centre, there is probably a need to consider how a wider range of stakeholders can be brought in to support and shape activity in Gorton. Although attendance at the Harpurhey event was lower than had been hoped, the strong representation from traders illustrated the importance of this particular group in creating effective local governance structures.

- 3.2 Local governance has been an issue for all centres, and is a point that should be considered as a wider policy challenge. Manchester has a significant number of centres – there are 17 identified in the current Local Plan but also many more alongside these. The council does not have the resources to support governance structures for all centres, and it is unlikely that there will be adequate local capacity across stakeholders to support formal governance arrangements in any but the largest centres. There is, therefore, a challenge to the council to consider how activity can be best supported at the local level.
- 3.3 The engagement of those who attended the workshop was key to their success, as wider commitment from stakeholders is essential for effective place management. Other than for Harpurhey, it was not always easy to get interest from landowners (who are often not local), and large corporate businesses were also more difficult to engage. Extending the pull of place management exercises to cover these stakeholders is a key challenge. As the next steps are considered for the pilot centre, it may be useful to focus on securing early outcomes that can highlight the value of the approach to all stakeholders, thereby encouraging wider involvement in the process.
- 3.3 As the reports for each centre are produced, there will be a range of actions proposed for each centre. Following publication of each report, it is proposed that the council will review recommendations and consider whether any short term actions should be implemented. Once the reports for all four pilots are available, it is suggested that the council reviews all recommendations and determines key general policy and practice to be considered across the city.