

Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2021

This Scrutiny meeting was conducted via Zoom, in accordance with the provisions of the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

Present:

Councillor Hacking - In the Chair
Councillors Andrews, Battle, Chambers, M Dar, Doswell, Douglas, Evans, Grimshaw, Hitchen, Kirkpatrick, Rawson and Russell

Also present:

Councillor Murphy, Deputy Leader
Councillor Akbar, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods
Councillor Craig, Executive Member for Adult Health and Wellbeing
Councillor Rahman, Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure
Councillor Stogia, Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport

Apologies:

Councillors Collins and Moore

CESC/21/07 Minutes

The Chair informed the Committee that the public meeting about the Peterloo Memorial had been arranged for 3 March 2021. He advised that it would have an independent Chair and would be made as accessible as possible.

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2021 as a correct record.

CESC/21/08 Neighbourhoods Directorate Budget Proposals 2021/22

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) which provided an updated Neighbourhoods Service 2021/21 budget and set out the savings proposals under the remit of the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee, reflecting any feedback from both the November and January scrutiny committees.

The main points and themes within the report included:

- Neighbourhoods Directorate background and context;
- Neighbourhoods revenue budget strategy;
- Capital strategy;
- Workforce implications;
- Equality, diversity and inclusion;
- Public consultation; and

- Our Corporate Plan.

The Chair drew Members' attention to point 2.6 in the report which outlined the Directorate's commitment to Zero Carbon Manchester and reducing carbon throughout all programmes of work. He welcomed this and advised that the Committee would be looking at how this was being delivered.

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

- Whether the funding Sport England had made available to local authorities who partnered with external providers to deliver leisure services would be sufficient and, if not, would this affect leisure provision;
- Were there plans in place for the re-opening of leisure facilities, in particular to attract back previous members and users;
- Whether Members could see the results of the public consultation which related to the Committee's remit before the consultation results were considered by the Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 1 March 2021;
- The potential savings of c£155,000 which could be achieved within Leisure Services from 2022/23 through economies of scale work across Greater Manchester;
- Whether the library and leisure facilities being used as COVID-19 testing centres were receiving any income from the government for this; and
- Highlighting proposals to extend Hough End Leisure Centre and welcoming that the Council was continuing to invest in leisure facilities.

The Head of Parks, Leisure, Youth and Events advised the Committee that the Council expected to receive a decision from Sport England about its allocation from the funding available within the next week or so. He reported that, while the £100 million funding which was to be shared across the country was not adequate, the Directorate had not factored this money into its budget for this financial year but did expect to receive approximately £1.3 million. He advised Members that this covered the period from December 2020 to March 2021 and that the Council would be making the case for the government to provide additional funding to cover the period from April 2021 to the end of the next financial year. In response to a Member's question, he reported that all the funding was being provided to local authorities who could then distribute it to their leisure operators as they saw fit.

The Head of Parks, Leisure, Youth and Events confirmed that his service was working with the Council's main leisure operators, GLL and SLM, regarding a recruitment campaign for when leisure facilities could re-open and had offered them additional resources to support this. In response to Members' questions, he advised that plans would include free and discounted activities and he clarified that the increased level of commercial income referred to at point 3.14 in the report would come from new activities, not by increasing the cost of existing services.

The Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure expressed concern that the support from the national government was not sufficient, considering the challenges the leisure sector was experiencing during the pandemic, and advised that the Council was continuing to make the case for further support. He also highlighted the

important role that parks had played during lockdowns, advising that increased usage had placed additional pressures on parks but that the restrictions had affected the ability to generate income from parks.

The Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) reported that she would ensure that consultation results which were relevant to the remit of this Committee were shared with Committee Members.

In response to a Member's question about Equality Impact Assessments (EIA), it was agreed that this would be discussed under the following item on the agenda.

The Head of Parks, Leisure, Youth and Events informed Members that there were 12 different leisure operators working across Greater Manchester, as well as the organisation Greater Sport and some bodies for individual sports which were based in the city, and that efficiencies could be achieved by sharing resources, particularly back office resources such as Human Resources advice and financial functions. He reported that the costs incurred through the use of sport and leisure venues as testing or vaccination centres were being recovered.

Decision

To note that the Committee's comments will be submitted to the next meeting of the Executive on 17 February 2021.

CESC/21/09 Equalities Update

The Committee received a report of the City Solicitor which described the process for and the role of Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) in the budget process for 2021-22. It outlined how this process had been evolved from previous years as well as highlighting how the service planning and business planning processes had also evolved, to ensure that equality considerations were more fully embedded. The report gave a high-level overview of some of the EIAs linked to the 2021-22 budget proposals.

The main points and themes within the report included:

- Assessing inequalities in the budget process;
- Equalities in service and business planning;
- The Equality Duty in the Equality Act 2010; and
- The initial assessment of budget related EIAs.

The Chair informed Members that he would discuss with the Chair of the Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee how the work of the Race Equality Working Group would be scrutinised.

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

- When had something been changed as a result of the EIA process;
- Concern that mental health was not mentioned and how had that been considered in the process;

- How the level of deprivation in different wards was taken into account in the EIA process; and
- Whether EIAs could be produced earlier in the process for future budgets to inform the discussion on the proposals.

The Director of Policy, Performance and Reform drew Members' attention to appendix 2, which included examples, in particular from Children's Services, where mitigations had been put in place to address inequalities in impact which had been identified through the EIA process. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager informed the Committee how his team provided quality assurance support to services, including to identify equality impact which was not immediately obvious, and that part of the review of the process would be to formalise the team's role in this. He advised Members that the purpose of EIAs was to inform the decision-making process and that his team was working with services to support the completion of EIAs in a timely way. In response to a Member's question, he confirmed that poverty would continue to be included as a characteristic in the Council's EIAs. He advised that mental health fell within the protected characteristic of disability and that his team would need to do some work with services to ensure that they were considering mental health as part of their EIAs and to strengthen this as part of the review.

The City Solicitor reported that the review of the EIA process would include ensuring that assessments took place earlier in the budget process so that concerns and mitigations could be explored at an earlier stage. She informed Members that she would take forward the issue raised about mental health and, as part of the review of the EIA process, ensure that mental health considerations were incorporated into the process. She advised the Committee that EIAs were undertaken on the basis of protected characteristics rather than on a ward basis but that an analysis was taking place of the cumulative impact where particular groups were identified as being impacted by a number of the proposals and that that would have some geographical impact; however, she reported that she would take away the issue raised about a ward based analysis as part of the review.

Decision

To note the report.

CESC/21/10 Residents and Communities Recovery Situation Report Summary

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) which provided a summary of the Residents and Communities recovery workstream.

The main points and themes within the report included:

- Residents at risk;
- Mitigating the impacts of COVID-19 on communities and adults;
- Digital inclusion;
- Mitigating the impacts of COVID-19 on children and young people;
- Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VSCE) sector; and

- Equalities.

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

- To thank all those involved in the work relating to the new variant of COVID-19 identified in the city;
- Praise for the way the roll out of the vaccine was being managed in the city and for all those involved;
- To recognise the essential role that Neighbourhood Teams had played during the pandemic; and
- Concern about people not self-isolating and that the funds in the Test and Trace support payment scheme discretionary fund were not sufficient.

The Executive Member for Adult Health and Wellbeing agreed with the Member's comment about the Test and Trace support payment scheme and advised that residents were also being directed to other sources of support. She praised the work of staff in the Neighbourhoods Directorate, who were continuing to provide essential services during the pandemic while also expanding their skillset to support the work relating to COVID-19. She informed Members about an item on Health Equity which had been discussed at the most recent meeting of the Health Scrutiny Committee and about work to ensure that different communities, including Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups and disabled people, could access the vaccine and had the right information to make decisions about being vaccinated. In response to a Member's request for a breakdown of data related to COVID-19 by ethnicity, she advised that she would circulate the report on Health Equity from the Health Scrutiny Committee's meeting to Members of this Committee. She advised that data on the take-up of vaccinations had just been received that week and would be made available to Council Members shortly.

Decisions

1. To note that the Executive Member for Adult Health and Wellbeing will circulate to Committee Members the report on Health Equity which was considered at the most recent meeting of the Health Scrutiny Committee.
2. To ask the Chair to write to the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) and the Head of Neighbourhoods on behalf of the Committee recognising the work of their service during the pandemic and to ask that the Committee's thanks be passed on to their staff.

CESC/21/11 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.

The Chair advised that he would discuss with officers the agenda for the next meeting, taking into account reports that Members had requested.

Decision

To note the report.