

Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 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, Hitchen, Kirkpatrick, Moore, Rawlins, Rawson and Russell

Also present:

Councillor Murphy, Deputy Leader
Councillor Craig, Executive Member for Adult Health and Wellbeing
Councillor Rahman, Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure
Chief Superintendent Paul Savill, Greater Manchester Police (GMP)

Apologies:

Councillor Grimshaw

CESC/21/12 Minutes

A Member requested that, following the recent public meeting about the Peterloo Memorial, the Committee receive a follow-up report setting out the next steps, particularly in relation to the decision taken and how comments submitted by people who had not been able to attend the meeting had been dealt with. The Chair agreed to this, advising that this was most likely to be considered at the next meeting in May 2021. He reported that there was a recording of this meeting and that, if any Members knew of any groups or residents who wanted to see this, they could contact him or the Scrutiny Support Officer about this.

Decisions

The Committee:-

1. Approve the minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2021 as a correct record.
2. Agree to receive a report at a future meeting on the next steps following the recent public meeting about the Peterloo Memorial.

CESC/21/13 Support for the Culture Sector in Response to the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) which provided an overview of the impact of COVID-19 on the city's cultural sector, outlined

access to local and national financial support for the sector and described the role the Council had played, with partners, in supporting the sector.

The Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure introduced the report, highlighting the impact of the pandemic on the sector, including the loss of income, and what had been done in response to this. He thanked the Head of Libraries, Galleries and Culture and the Director of Culture, for their work and made reference to the work to widen access to and participation in cultural activities prior to the pandemic and the progress that had been made.

The Director of Culture outlined some of the key challenges facing the sector, including the end of furlough and the Cultural Relief Fund, the impact on freelancers, the supply chain and the pipeline of future talent and audience confidence as venues re-opened. He also highlighted the amount of change and uncertainty the sector was dealing with, with new government advice meaning that recovery plans had had to be re-written and uncertainty about whether venues would be able to re-open on the planned date. He reported that over the next 18 to 24 months there would be a focus on business and economic recovery and also health recovery for staff, audiences and participants and he outlined the key areas of this recovery work, including promotional activity, events, children and young people, network development support, workforce development, research and development and sustainable working.

The Principal Resources and Programmes Officer (Culture) delivered a presentation on the Cultural Impact Survey. The main points and themes within the presentation included:

- Economic impact;
- Social value;
- Funding and income;
- Reach;
- Demographic data on audiences, participants, volunteers, employees and Board Members;
- School engagement with cultural organisations;
- Carbon reduction; and
- Cultural engagement by ward.

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

- Whether demographic data could be provided for Chief Executives of cultural organisations;
- Freelancers having to find alternative employment;
- The Audience Development project, including engaging with new audiences and links with the NHS;
- How cultural events and venues would be promoted to the public when venues re-opened; and
- Redundancies in the sector.

In response to a Member's question about responses to the Cultural Impact Survey, the Head of Libraries, Galleries and Culture reported that most of the larger organisations were included in the Cultural Impact Survey data, including those funded by the Arts Council and other public sector bodies, but that he would provide a more definitive answer on this.

The Principal Resources and Programmes Officer (Culture) reported that the Survey did not currently ask for demographic information on Chief Executives, advising that confidentiality issues would have to be considered if gathering information on specific posts; however, she advised that the questions were reviewed every year so consideration could be given to how data on the diversity of organisations' leadership could be included. The Director of Culture informed Members about work currently taking place to look at how the leadership of the cultural sector could be diversified.

The Principal Policy Officer (Culture) reported that there was a high level of freelancers in the sector, possibly double the number of employees. She advised that, through supporting the benefactor of the Hardship Fund for freelancers, knowledge about this group and the challenges they faced was expanding and that this would be reviewed. She reported that freelancers had been creative about finding alternative work and that national data showed that, among both freelancers and employees from the cultural sector, those leaving the sector at this time were disproportionately those who were younger, female and from diverse backgrounds and that there was a risk of the talent pool in the sector being significantly damaged. The Director of Culture reported that more data was expected to come out of the national networks about what was happening with freelancers but that this was not available yet.

The Director of Culture reported that Manchester had successfully bid for approximately £250,000 from the Cultural Relief Fund for audience development work to enable cultural organisations and venues to work together to re-engage audiences. He also outlined how the sector was working with the NHS and promoting the message that engaging with arts and culture was beneficial for health and well-being. The Culture Lead provided Members with an overview of the grassroots engagement work which would be taking place as part of the Audience Development project. She informed Members that, just before the first lockdown, the Council had launched a new website called Loads To Do, which provided residents with one site where they could view details of the creative and cultural offer across the city, not just in the city centre. She advised that it would be re-launched as part of the Welcome Back campaign with the Communications Team and the Audience Development campaign. A Member suggested that the Committee receive further information on the Audience Development project. The Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure responded that the audience participation data detailed in the Cultural Impact Survey did not reflect all cultural activities across the city and in neighbourhoods and suggested that a piece of work be undertaken to capture this information. He advised that he would speak to officers about this outside of the meeting.

The Principal Policy Officer informed Members that the Cultural Impact Survey covered the period to March 2020 so the results of the next survey would need to be studied to see the full impact of the pandemic, including job losses within the sector.

In response to a Member's question, the Director of Culture reported that the funding which organisations had received included money to make their venues Covid secure and that making audiences feel safe was key to attracting them back. In response to a further question, he advised that a national conversation was taking place about a government-backed insurance scheme to cover event cancellation due to COVID-19.

Decision

The Committee note the report.

CESC/21/14 HMICFRS Victim Services Inspection Update

The Committee received a presentation from Chief Superintendent Paul Savill of Greater Manchester Police (GMP).

The main points and themes within the presentation included:

- Causes for concern identified in the Victim Service Assessment;
- The operating context; and
- GMP's response;

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

- Were all cases that had not been properly investigated in the past now being reviewed;
- How was it ensured that calls to the police were given the correct priority level;
- How had the approach to downgrading cases changed;
- Response to Anti-Social Behaviour;
- Under-reporting of crimes such as rape and sexual assault and what was GMP doing to improve women's confidence in reporting incidents; and
- Request for closer working with local communities and Neighbourhood Teams in setting local priorities.

Chief Superintendent Savill informed Members that GMP had reviewed domestic abuse, child vulnerability and rape and serious sexual assault cases, working with the victims, exploring any opportunities that had been missed and which could be progressed and looking at what support could be provided to victims. In response to a Member's question, he explained how GMP linked into victim services.

Chief Superintendent Savill reported that two issues had been identified with call handling; firstly, that all the information provided by the caller was not being consistently and completely recorded, which made the assessment of priority difficult and, secondly, that more work was needed to ensure that staff understood and could properly apply the risk assessment structure. He outlined the THRIVE assessment that was used and stated that this assessment should now be logged for every incident. He advised that incidents should only be downgraded if any of the

indicators assessed under THRIVE changed and only with agreement from the caller and victim. He reported that anti-social behaviour was a concern and focus within GMP and nationally, with officers taking into account whether the behaviour constituted continued and continuing harassment, as well as any vulnerability factors.

A Member asked if the Committee could have a follow-up report at an appropriate time to see if the changes were having an effect, to which the Chair agreed.

Chief Superintendent Savill advised that there were areas where there was less confidence in the police and likely to be more under-reporting of crimes and that he would be focusing on some of these areas to address this, working with Community Safety partners. He offered to provide more information on how this work was progressing at a future meeting. He acknowledged that it was likely that the majority of rapes and serious sexual assaults were not being reported and advised that the best way to improve confidence was through prompt, effective and supportive investigation. He informed Members about work to improve this including training for the officers who were the first officers in attendance following these reports,

In response to a Member's question about capacity and capability within GMP, Chief Superintendent Savill advised that, while not all crimes were investigated, the evaluation of investigations demonstrated that there had been an improvement towards a demonstrable high level of investigative quality. He advised that GMP's younger, less experienced officers were keen and very capable and he had confidence in their ability to investigate crime, although work was taking place to further develop officers' skill base. He informed the Committee that re-invigorating neighbourhood policing strategy was a priority for GMP and that this included engaging with communities and Ward Councillors to identify local priorities.

The Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) outlined the role of the Community Safety Partnership, including in relation to the GMP's improvement plan. She noted that the Committee normally received an annual report of the Community Safety Partnership and advised that the next one would be due around June 2021. She advised that the Partnership's strategy was due to be refreshed and that this would include reviewing its priorities. She advised that further work was also needed to embed the Neighbourhood Model in this area of work and that further information could be provided in a future report.

The Chair thanked Chief Superintendent Savill for attending and thanked him, GMP officers and civilian staff for their work.

Decision

The Committee agree to receive a follow-up report in approximately six months' time to see if the changes are having an effect.

CESC/21/15 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;
- The Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Sector; and
- Equalities.

The Executive Member for Adult Health and Wellbeing suggested that at future meetings the Committee might want to look at specific areas of the COVID-19 recovery work, rather than receiving an overview.

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

- Work to vaccinate rough sleepers;
- Work to engage with hidden communities who were reluctant to engage with authorities in relation to testing and vaccinations; and
- Support for VCSE organisations.

The Executive Member for Adult Health and Wellbeing reported that the vaccination programme had three targeted strands, one around particular ethnic minority groups, one relating to disability and a third, Inclusive Health, which included rough sleepers and homeless people. She explained the work taking place with charities and organisations which supported homeless people and that there was a site where homeless people could go to be vaccinated and also a van providing vaccines.

The Executive Member for Adult Health and Wellbeing outlined how VCSE organisations had been involved in the Health Equity work, including as members of community sounding boards, and the additional funding made available to VCSE groups undertaking health inclusion work.

The Head of Neighbourhoods informed the Committee how learning from the intensive engagement activity in areas where surge testing had been carried out was being used to identify different ways to work with some communities, including working with partner organisations who were trusted in those areas.

In response to a Member's question on how many families the new families hostel would accommodate and how long families would stay at the hostel, the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) advised that she would provide this information after the meeting. The Chair asked that this information be circulated to all Members of the Committee via the Scrutiny Support Officer.

In response to a question about domestic abuse, the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) drew Members' attention to the data within the report and informed Members about additional funding to support work in this area. She reported that officers had already suggested that they provide a report to the Committee in approximately June 2021 when full details of the Domestic Abuse Bill going through parliament were known. Chief Superintendent Savill reported that GMP had invested resources to triage domestic abuse reports within 24 hours and outlined how this was

dealt with, advising that there was a good system in place, working with and referring cases to partner organisations as appropriate.

Decisions

The Committee:-

1. Note the report.
2. Request that information on how many families the new families hostel will accommodate and how long families will stay at the hostel be circulated to all Members of the Committee.

CESC/21/16 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.

A Member requested to receive information on serious and organised crime, including gun crime and knife crime, in a future report, to which the Chair agreed.

Decision

The Committee note the report and agree the work programme, subject to the above comment.