

Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2021

Present:

Councillor Hacking - In the Chair

Councillors Azra Ali, Shaukat Ali, Andrews, Connolly, M Dar, Evans, Grimshaw, Hilal, S Judge, Rawson, Sheikh, Whiston, Wills and Wilson

Also present:

Councillor Rahman, Deputy Leader

Councillor Midgley, Executive Member for Health and Care

Karen Shannon, Manchester Histories

Priya Chopra, Saheli

Apologies:

Councillors Battle, Chambers and Douglas

CESC/21/36 Minutes

Councillor Shaukat Ali requested that his apologies be recorded for the meeting on 20 July 2021, to which the Chair agreed. The Chair noted the requests from Members at that meeting for further information and reports relating to homelessness and advised that he would take this forward.

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 20 July 2021 as a correct record, subject to the above amendment.

CESC/21/37 Histories, Stories and Voices in Manchester's Public Realm

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) which provided an update about the Histories, Stories and Voices programme.

The main points and themes within the report included:

- Background to the review;
- The consultation;
- The review of cultural and heritage objects in the city; and
- Public Art Strategy development.

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

- To welcome the way that the Whitworth Art Gallery had put its origination and connection to its benefactor into context;
- That information should be displayed next to statues in the public realm to inform the public and provide context, in a similar way to what the Whitworth had done;

- That any future public objects, street names and plaques should represent the city that Manchester had become;
- That some aspects of the city's history were not widely known and that this should be addressed;
- Concern that the respondents to the consultation were not representative of all demographic groups;
- The approach to any identified objects of concern in a modern-day values context or objects that were the subject of significant controversy or at potential risk;
- That the mural of Marcus Rashford in Withington had been omitted from the list in the report;
- That a lot could be learnt from the project which led to the Emmeline Pankhurst statue, including how the sculptor, Hazel Reeves, had engaged with local communities; and
- The campaign for a statue of the boxer Len Johnson.

The Deputy Leader advised that the responses to the consultation indicated that most people wanted to understand more about the people and events that were memorialised through these statues and monuments and the historical context rather than wanting them removed and that work was taking place to develop a platform through which this could be achieved. He reported that the other main feedback from the consultation was that there was not enough diversity reflected in the public realm. He commented that Len Johnson's story was one which reflected the diversity of the city, that he supported the campaign and that the Council would be working with and supporting the campaign group, which was trying to identify a suitable site for his statue.

In response to a Member's request to see an example of the database providing information on these objects, the Head of Libraries, Galleries and Culture advised that this could be shared with Members once it was available. He reported that, in addition to the database, this work would also involve telling the story of Manchester through the city's libraries and Archives+. The Deputy Leader informed Members that work had previously been carried out by various organisations to record information on objects in the public realm but that it needed to be made more easily accessible.

In response to a Member's question about objects outside of the city centre, Karen Shannon from Manchester Histories reported that the responses to the consultation had demonstrated that people wanted objects and figures from their local area to be included in this work and that this had been taken on board in the project. Regarding contested statues, such as the statue of Robert Peel, she noted that most people did not want the statues to be removed but wanted to understand the story behind them and that this involved complex issues relating to inequality, racism and underrepresentation. She advised that difficult stories from the past needed to be told with better interpretation of them which made them relevant to modern times and representative of the city as it was now and that further consultation was needed in order to achieve this. She outlined some of the work to address the underrepresentation of some groups in the consultation responses, including a task group looking at how to engage with young people.

The Deputy Leader highlighted the impact of the pandemic on the consultation and assured Members that this was an ongoing process, with more work taking place to engage with different communities, including young people, ethnic minorities and areas of the city with lower levels of engagement. In response to a Member's question, he confirmed that the Council had looked at how other cities had responded to this issue.

Decision

That the Committee will receive further updates on this work.

CESC/21/38 Domestic Abuse

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) which detailed a summary of recent work to address Domestic Violence and Abuse, including the Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy and the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

The main points and themes within the report included:

- Background information;
- Domestic Abuse Act readiness and implementation work;
- Domestic Abuse and Covid – Response into Recovery;
- Other service developments; and
- Current and emerging issues and challenges.

Priya Chopra from Saheli outlined the work of her organisation, which had been set up to support south Asian woman and children experiencing domestic abuse and was now supporting women from a range of ethnic minority backgrounds. She explained the challenges in getting these women's views and experiences across to policy makers and how Saheli had worked with Council officers to look at issues these women were facing, including the barriers they faced in accessing services. She outlined how they had ensured that these women, including older women from these communities, were included in the consultation on the new strategy. She also outlined some of the challenges that the pandemic had presented, as women had had less opportunities during lockdown to be away from the perpetrator and other family members in order to access support. She explained how Saheli had worked with other organisations to address issues this group of women faced, for example, ensuring that women living in predominantly white areas could access their services and enabling women to access foodbanks. She advised that Saheli was working with the commissioners to ensure that the action plan for the strategy addressed the issues that these survivors of domestic abuse were dealing with.

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

- Promoting the new strategy, especially to marginalised communities;
- That the Council should model good practice, including working to achieve White Ribbon accreditation;
- That financial abuse should be explicitly referenced in the strategy;

- That the term “gender reassignment”, used in the “Ensuring Equality” section of the draft strategy, while taken from the Equality Act 2010, was considered outdated and “gender identity” was the preferred term;
- What work would be done with partner organisations to address domestic abuse within LGBTQ communities;
- Work to prevent domestic abuse, including considering the objectification of women in advertising around the city and what could be done to address this and the teaching of healthy relationships in schools and how to work with men who were abusers or at risk of becoming abusers;
- The link between gambling and domestic abuse;
- To thank officers for the way the consultation had been conducted;
- How would the voice of the survivor continue to be heard through the implementation of the strategy; and
- What plans were there to ensure that teams across the Council were aware of the strategy and understood their responsibilities.

The Community Safety Lead reported that raising awareness was a key strand of the work on domestic violence and abuse and that officers would work with partners, providers and communities to ensure the right approach to communicating this issue with the public. She advised that, following its launch, work would also take place to raise awareness of and embed this work across the Council and partner organisations. She informed Members that the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board was looking at what needed to be done to achieve White Ribbon accreditation and that this would be progressed. She confirmed that the terminology in the equality section of the strategy would be amended. In response to a Member’s request for more information on the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board, she advised that she would share the Terms of Reference of the Board, which included its membership. She recognised that the voice of domestic abuse survivors needed to be incorporated throughout the implementation of the strategy and advised that work was taking place to identify the most appropriate way to do this.

The Domestic Abuse Reduction Manager advised that the strategy covered economic abuse which recognised a wider range of issues than financial abuse, such as issues in accessing work or benefits. She confirmed that gambling had been raised as a key area under economic abuse, that links were being made with Gamble Aware and other relevant organisations to progress this work and that officers could report back on this at a later date. She also outlined work to address domestic abuse within LGBTQ communities, including working with the LGBT Foundation. In response to a Member’s question, she informed Members about the Sanctuary Scheme to enable victims of domestic abuse to stay in their own homes where it was safe to do so.

The Community Safety Lead reported that early intervention and prevention was one of the main strands of the strategy. She advised that the Council had invested in a number of early intervention services which had started this year, including work with children and young people. The Domestic Abuse Reduction Manager informed Members that significant investment had been made in behaviour change programmes, which would now be available to a wider range of perpetrators. She reported that a pilot project was taking place in south Manchester, as part of the Home Office’s Drive programme, to work with high risk, high harm, repeat

perpetrators of domestic abuse. She informed Members that there were now Domestic Abuse workers in Early Help Hubs and she reported that the Council was working closely with schools to ensure consistency in teaching about relationships and to ensure that they were aware of therapeutic interventions available for children affected by domestic abuse and children who were starting to display similar behaviours. In response to a question from the Chair, she reported that, at present, referrals to the perpetrator programmes mainly came from services for children and families but that these programmes were being promoted to other partners such as housing providers and Greater Manchester Police and that people could also self-refer.

The Executive Member for Health and Care supported a Member's comment that this work was everybody's responsibility and advised that this point would be emphasised in communications about the strategy. She suggested that the Committee receive an update report at a future meeting to monitor progress.

Decision

To note the report.

CESC/21/39 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 the scope of the HMICFRS Victim Services Inspection Update report scheduled for the October meeting would be discussed. He also noted the report on Highways Crimes which was listed as to be scheduled and advised that this would either be incorporated into another report or be scheduled as a standalone report for a future meeting.

Decision

To note the report and agree the work programme.