

# **Economy Scrutiny Committee**

## **Minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2021**

### **Present:**

Councillor H Priest (Chair) – in the Chair

Councillors Doswell, Farrell, Johns, Moore, Raikes, Stanton and Shilton Godwin

### **Also present:**

Councillor Midgley, Executive Member for Health and Care

Councillor White, Executive Member for Housing and Employment

### **Apologies:**

Councillors Baker-Smith and Noor

## **ESC/21/47 Minutes**

A Member commented that a report that described how the recommendations of the Poverty Truth Commission were being implemented should be included as an item on the Committee's work programme (see ESC/21/42 Manchester's support for families living in poverty).

### **Decision**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2021 were approved as a correct record, subject to the above amendment.

## **ESC/21/48 Build Back Fairer – COVID-19 Marmot Review: Housing, Unemployment and Transport**

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Inclusive Economy and Strategic Lead Policy and Partnerships that provides an overview of the Marmot Build Back Fairer report focusing on housing, unemployment and transport in Manchester, in line with the remit of the Committee. The report discussed the impact of COVID-19 on housing, unemployment and transport in the city, relative to health inequalities, and outlined Manchester's response to recommendations in the Build Back Fairer report.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Describing the impact of COVID-19 in a Manchester context;
- Noting that The Marmot report detailed the disproportionately negative impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had in Greater Manchester;
- Describing the factors that had affected the inequalities in infection and mortality from COVID-19 in Greater Manchester;

- Noting that Manchester's residents had been disproportionately negatively impacted by the pandemic.
- Describing a range of factors such as Housing, Work and Unemployment, Transport and Active Travel in a Manchester context and describing the associated The Build Back Fairer report summaries; and
- Providing information relating to the Marmot Report Framework and Recommendations and detailing the Manchester's response to these Recommendations.

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

- The need to retrofit domestic properties, particularly those in the Private Rented Sector;
- The need to protect tenants from eviction if they did complain about disrepair in their privately rented accommodation;
- The need to promote the Good Employment Charter, noting the impact that good quality employment could have on a person's outcomes;
- The call for improved and affordable public transport to connect residents with employment and training opportunities;
- What metrics and timescales would be used to measure progress against the Marmot Recommendations;
- Noting that the Marmot Review and Recommendations was a tool that could be used to demonstrate to the Government the need for appropriate levels of funding to address the identified inequalities;
- Welcoming the recognition that being in good work was usually protective of health while poor quality work, stressful jobs, and unemployment, particularly long-term unemployment, contribute significantly to poor health and low wellbeing and increase the risk of mortality;
- Consideration needed to be given to all needs of different residents, including disabled residents when considering the re-design of how major areas of the city centre would function and to reallocate space to walking and public realm;
- More information was sought on the Anchor pilot scheme;
- Noting that the NHS was a major employer in the city and a key partner of the Council they should use their procurement policies and scale of purchasing to deliver Social Value; and
- The need for accessible and affordable child care places; especially for those families who were earning just above the threshold for free child care.

The Executive Member for Housing and Employment stated that COVID-19 had highlighted and exacerbated many of the health inequalities that existed in the city. He described that prior to this the city had experienced a sustained period of austerity and cuts to public service funding. He advised that the wider determinants of health, such as quality housing and employment were understood. He called upon the Government for adequate funding to be able to deliver more affordable and social housing. He advocated the need to take action to address poor practice in the Private Rented Sector using Houses in Multiple Occupation and Selective Licensing schemes. He further made

reference to the Section 21 Team who would support those residents at risk of eviction from a private landlord. He concluded by reiterating that the wider determinants of health needed to be addressed such as improved public transport networks and investment in skills and training for residents and he would continue to lobby Government for a fair funding settlement.

The Director of Inclusive Economy advised the Committee that a Task Group would be established to be Chaired by the Director of Public Health to oversee the delivery of the Marmot recommendations. She described that the reporting metrics would be agreed via this group and could be shared with Members when available.

The Director of Inclusive Economy stated that the recently launched Anchors Pilot had a twin focus of supporting Manchester to become a Real Living Wage City and increasing commitment to employing local people, particularly from our more disadvantaged communities. This would further support the implementation of the Good Employment Charter and any future evolving definition of a GM quality of work guarantee. In response to a comment regarding those areas of the city that did not have a major employer she described that they would be working for the city as a whole and not just the geographical location then were situated in, adding that in North Manchester there existed a North Manchester Business Network with good links between local smaller business and community initiatives.

The Director of Inclusive Economy acknowledged the comments regarding the NHS and the role they played in the city as a major employer. She stated that officers had spoken with their procurement teams however stated it was important to recognise that the NHS was subject to national procurement policies and guidance so had little local discretion on such matters. She advised that the local hospitals had initiated schemes and programmes to deliver training and employment opportunities for local residents.

The City Centre Growth Manager advised that work continued at a Greater Manchester (GM) level to improve public transport, especially the bus network and made reference to the Bus Service Improvement Plan, adding that the ability to franchise the bus network would present an opportunity to address the issue of fares and deliver a planned integrated service. The Chair commented that there was need to report any analysis of changes to modes of transport and travel, noting the impact of COVID-19 and emissions.

The Director of Inclusive Economy acknowledged the comment regarding the need for appropriate, affordable child care and stated that this provision is reported to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee. The Chair stated that she would discuss this further with the Chair of that Committee.

## **Decision**

The Committee:-

- (1) Recommends that the Executive Member for Housing and Employment lobby the Government for adequate funding to enable the retrofitting of properties in the Private Rented Sector.
- (2) Notes that the Chair will discuss with the Chair of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee the issue of appropriate provision of affordable child care across the city.

## **ESC/21/49 Work and Health**

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Inclusive Economy that provided an update on the activity of the most recent Working Well programmes (Work & Health, Early Help and JETS) and the impact of the programme overall in Manchester.

Working Well is a well-established Greater Manchester Combined Authority commissioned programme which is based on a key worker model bringing together support to tackle barriers that affect people's ability to enter the labour market and sustain jobs. It has evolved since 2014 to reflect a focus on different target groups, with the latest being the Work and Health programme. In 2020 it was expanded with the JETS programme as part of the National Plan for Jobs in response to COVID19.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Describing the content of the report in a Health and policy context;
- Describing the Manchester Population Health Plan 2018-2027 that set out a priority of 'Strengthening the positive impact of work on health';
- An overview of each Working Well programme and its impact in Manchester;
- Economic recovery and the Government's Plans for Jobs; and
- Conclusions and next steps.

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

- Noting the positive progress made in relation to the Real Living Wage;
- An explanation was sought as to the reason the 'no work requirements group' continued to rise from c10,000 to c17,000;
- Comparative figures were sought, where available across the range of metrics reported as this would assist with the scrutiny process;
- Clarification was sought as to the type of jobs and sectors people were accessing through the initiatives;
- An analysis of the success of the Kickstart programme should be included on the Committee's work programme;
- Was the reported support for 8,000+ Manchester residents over the next 3 years as part of the Restart programme an ambition or part of the contract with Ingeus;
- The need to recognise the importance of the quality of jobs people were accessing and this importance this had on people and their outcomes;

- The need for programmes to be flexible to respond to the changing needs and demands of the labour market;
- Supporting the adoption of the Real Living Wage;
- The need to consider what was best for the individual and not focus on targets and welcoming the reported holistic approach taken by advisors;
- Calling for more regional control on the design and delivery of skills programmes;
- Requesting the independent evaluation of the Population Health Prevention Programme be shared with Members when this was available;
- Noting that people were often reluctant to engage with the benefit service due to the perceptions that any reassessment of their benefits would result in them being financially worse off or having to commence the claiming of benefits again;
- An update on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) was sought, noting the importance of the for both Manchester and the wider city region;
- Welcoming the Working Well programme that had helped drive Disability Support Webinars with Small, Medium enterprises (SMEs) by offering to upskill businesses to deal with a variety of health conditions;

The Executive Member for Health and Care stated that health inequalities were inextricably linked to the wider determinants of health. She stated that the city region needed appropriate funding to support the actions identified to address these inequalities and to counter the significant impact that austerity has had on the residents of the city. She advocated that addressing health inequalities should be the central consideration to all decision making.

The Work and Skills Lead commented that the reported rise from c10,000 to c17,000 in the 'no work requirements group' could be attributed to the recording of data by the DWP following conversations with residents, however he advised that he would seek clarification on this point. He advised that Job Centre Plus staff were encouraged to engage in holistic conversation to ensure potential job opportunities were appropriate and sustainable, taking into account a range of considerations that included travel requirements.

The Work and Skills Lead advised that the figures reported for the Restart programme were part of the contract arrangements.

The Work and Skills Lead advised that comparative data where available could be shared with the Committee, and he further advised that the type of work people were accessing through these programmes were predominantly in the Care and Customer Service sectors. He further commented that the roles of the key workers was to review all options that were available, including understanding the changing labour market to ensure the most appropriate and tailored support was provided and identify and address any barriers to accessing employment opportunities. A member noted the need to acknowledge people's genuine concerns regarding accessing jobs in certain sectors, in particular the care sector if they themselves had a health issue due to the perceived increased risks of contracting COVID-19.

The Director of Inclusive Economy commented that a report on the impact of Kickstart, a programme delivered locally by Jobcentre Plus, offers 6 month jobs for young people aged 16-24 who are currently claiming Universal Credit and who are at risk of long term unemployment could be provided to the Committee at an appropriate time, adding that initial analysis indicated that the outcomes were not as good as had been anticipated, despite the impact of the pandemic and this strengthened the case for more local control over the design and delivery of schemes.

The Director of Inclusive Economy stated that further information in the business that had delivered the Disability Support Webinars would be provided to the Members following the meeting. She stated this importance of this approach was recognised and commented that a report issued by the British Chamber of Commerce had recently published a report that emphasised the need to consider the health and wellbeing of employees.

The Director of Inclusive Economy acknowledged the comments made regarding the barriers presented by perceptions of the benefits system by stating that Universal Credit is more flexible than previous systems and it was designed to be an 'in work' benefit, however acknowledged the comment from the Chair on this subject.

The Chair commented that she would discuss with the Chair of the Health Scrutiny Committee how the reporting of the independent evaluation of the Population Health Prevention Programme could be appropriately reported to scrutiny.

## **Decision**

The Committee:-

- (1) Recommends that the Director of Inclusive Economy circulate for information the details of organisations who had delivered the Disability Support Webinars;
- (2) Request that a report on the impact and outcomes of the Kickstart programme be added to the Committee's work programme for consideration at an appropriate time;
- (3) Note that the Chair will discuss with the Chair of the Health Scrutiny Committee the options for reporting the findings of the independent evaluation of the Population Health Prevention Programme

## **ESC/21/50 Opportunities and issues for older workers in the Labour Market**

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Inclusive Economy and Consultant in Public Health (Ageing Well Lead) that provided data on the employment and skills status of workers (aged 50 to 64) in Manchester, how they had been impacted by Covid and the actions being taken to connect them to opportunities in the City as part of the Economic Recovery Strategy.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and context, noting that older workers who are out of work are twice as likely to be long-term unemployed as younger workers who are out of work;
- Describing the situation for Older Workers in Manchester;
- Data on Employment and Skills for those residents aged over 50 years old;
- Data on the levels of Universal Credit claimants for those residents aged over 50 years old;
- Describing the Impact of COVID-19 on employment;
- Challenges and issues, including the digital divide and the digital inclusion work underway to address this;
- Information on Age Friendly Manchester (AFM) and Manchester's Ageing Strategy - Manchester: A Great Place to Grow Older 2017 – 2021;
- Programmes and work being delivered across Manchester Age Friendly Employment; and
- Conclusions.

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

- The need to give due consideration when describing digital skills when discussing the over 50's as the range of knowledge and experience could differ greatly;
- Noting that it was socio economic barriers that presented the largest challenge to many older residents;
- The need to recognise that over 50's had a wealth of other experiences that they could bring to the work place;
- Noting the need for employers to recognise and accommodate the different life pressures experienced by older workers;
- People should be supported and encouraged to prepare a CV rather than having to rely solely on submitting job applications on-line;
- Welcoming the reported co-creation activities, adding that this approach of utilising and learning from lived experience should be applied to all services and programmes and would there be any evaluation of this undertaken;
- Had consideration been given as to the impact of Long Covid

The Director of Inclusive Economy acknowledged the comment made regarding the need to recognise the different needs and challenges for people over the age of 50, and the different existing skills sets within this cohort. She commented that in Manchester the digital inclusion work had targeted over 65s.

In response to the comment made regarding CV's the Director of Inclusive Economy commented that Manchester City Council had changed its policy and would now accept a CV and covering letter, however acknowledged the wider point on this issue. She further stated that a report on the outcomes of the co-creation activities would be submitted to the Committee at an appropriate time for consideration. In response to the

issue regarding Long Covid and its impact on the over 50s she advised that no specific data was currently available however this would continue to be monitored.

The Programme Lead – Age Friendly Manchester welcomed the comment made regarding changing caring responsibilities and stressed the importance of employers recognising these. He stated that Manchester Council had responded by introducing a flexible working policy and there was a need to engage with the private sector to demonstrate the benefits to both employers and employees by introducing such schemes.

### **Decision**

The Committee recommend that an evaluation report on the co-creation activities relating to the Over 50's and Employment Project be submitted for consideration at an appropriate time.

### **ESC/21/51 Overview Report**

The report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit which contained key decisions within the Committee's remit and responses to previous recommendations was submitted for comment. Members were also invited to agree the Committee's future work programme.

In response to a question from the Member the Chair commented that the COVID-19 Situation Report would be included as a regular item on future agendas and that the Economy Dashboard would also be included at the appropriate time.

### **Decision**

The Committee note the report and agree the work programme, noting the comments above.