

Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2021

Present:

Councillor Hacking - In the Chair
Councillors, Shaukat Ali, Andrews, Chambers, Connolly, M Dar, Evans, Grimshaw, Hilal, S Judge, Rawson, Sheikh, Wills and Wilson

Also present:

Councillor Craig, Deputy Leader (Finance)
Councillor Rahman, Deputy Leader
Councillor Midgley, Executive Member for Health and Care
Councillor Rawlins, Executive Member for the Environment
Councillor Newman, Lead Member for Age Friendly Manchester
John McGrath, Manchester International Festival (MIF)
Menaka Munro, MIF

Apologies:

Councillors Azra Ali and Whiston

CESC/21/45 Minutes

The Chair informed the Committee that discussions were ongoing about the Mayor of Greater Manchester or the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime attending a future meeting.

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2021 as a correct record.

CESC/21/46 Neighbourhood Directorate Budget 2022/23

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) which stated that, following the Spending Review announcements and other updates, the Council was forecasting an estimated shortfall of £4m in 2022/23, £64m in 2023/24 and £85m by 2024/25. The report set out the high-level position. Officers had identified options to balance the budget in 2022/23 which were subject to approval.

The main points and themes within the report included:

- Current budget position;
- Headline priorities for the services;
- Revenue budget strategy, including changes approved for 2022/23 as part of the 2021/22 Budget Process and new proposed changes; and
- Capital budget and pipeline priorities.

In response to a Member's question about the funding of the leisure operator GLL, the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) advised the Committee that the proposed ongoing support to GLL was a short-term requirement in response to the impact of

COVID-19, that the Council was confident that GLL's financial position was improving as the leisure sector's recovery continued and it was expected that this would be paid back as part of overall budget arrangement.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) reported that budget reports were being considered by all six scrutiny committees this week, that it was expected that the financial settlement from the Government would be announced in December 2021 and that the scrutiny committees would receive further reports in February 2022, before the proposals were submitted to the Executive; however, she advised that, if the financial settlement from Government caused significant concern, the scrutiny committees could receive further budget reports in January 2022.

Decision

To note the report.

CESC/21/47 Manchester International Festival 2021

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) which provided an overview of the outcomes of the 2021 Manchester International Festival (MIF21). The report provided a summary of performance against the agreed objectives and detailed the impact of the festival, based on the results of the independent evaluation. The report demonstrated how the festival delivered an inspiring programme which enabled Manchester residents and wider audiences to return to the city to enjoy arts and culture, despite the challenges and uncertainty of COVID-19.

The main points and themes within the report included:

- Context (the COVID-19 pandemic);
- Assessment of delivery of objectives for 2021, which were:
 - To continue to grow the international reputation of the Festival and the city – with artists, audiences, partners and media coverage from all five continents and from a wide variety of backgrounds – in turn driving reach for the Festival, attracting people to the city and the best staff to our team;
 - To bring the most extraordinary artists from around the world to Manchester to create diverse and inspiring new work – made in Manchester and shared across the globe;
 - To connect in new and ever deeper ways with the city and region of Manchester, increasing the range and diversity of those engaging with the Festival, with an ever more visible and transformative presence in the city; and
 - To develop the brand, profile and awareness of MIF/The Factory locally, nationally and internationally in readiness for opening.
- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), sustainability and financial performance;
- Zero carbon;
- Employment and skills;
- Manchester International Festival 2023; and

- Future Manchester City Council support for the Festival and The Factory.

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

- The attendance figures, including how they were arrived at for free non-ticketed events and whether additional data was available on where people attending ticketed events were from;
- That neighbourhood organisers had an important role in promoting culture and making it as available as possible and were these temporary or permanent roles; and
- That more events should take place in different neighbourhoods, not just in the city centre.

John McGrath, Artistic Director and CEO of MIF, reported that the attendance figures for the non-ticketed events were based on the same methodology as had been used for events such as the Olympics and that this involved an estimate of the flow of people through the area and, for the work in Piccadilly Gardens, a visual survey of the percentage of people passing through who had stopped to look at it. He highlighted the value of using public spaces to introduce people to the Festival and advised that this could then encourage them to attend ticketed events. In response to the question about the breakdown of people attending ticketed events, he advised that the Audience Survey had previously been mainly carried out by email but that not everyone responded and those that did were not necessarily representative of all attendees. He reported that this year, in addition to the email survey, face-to-face surveys had been carried out at some events, although he recognised that more work was needed to improve the data gathered, particularly ensuring that it was representative of the whole audience. He advised that the data in the report providing a breakdown of the attendees combined data from both ticketed and free events but would be skewed towards attendees at the ticketed events. In response to the Member's request, he advised that he would look at whether data could be provided specifically relating to the ticketed events. He reported that it appeared that the audience was becoming more representative of the communities in the city. He advised that, particularly from the 2025 Festival onwards, MIF was looking at making the Festival less city centre focused and locating work in neighbourhoods, especially areas further from the city centre whose residents might not travel into the city centre, including Wythenshawe and some areas of north Manchester.

Menaka Munro, Senior Engagement Manager of MIF, reported that the three neighbourhood organisers in Manchester had been short-term roles from January to August as part of a pilot programme. She advised that this had been very successful and that MIF had learnt a lot about the areas covered by the pilot and as well as gaining learning and feedback which would shape the model of the programme in the future. She advised that MIF wanted to continue this work and more than double the number of neighbourhood organisers in Manchester and that the organisation was reviewing which areas of the city should be involved in this.

The Deputy Leader informed Members about work that had been taking place in the city over the past few years to widen access to and participation in cultural activities and highlighted that MIF had held activities and events outside of the city centre. He

agreed that the neighbourhood organisers' work was important and should be continued.

In response to questions from the Chair about how the pandemic would affect the way the Festival was delivered in future and how international festivals could respond to the challenge of climate change, John McGrath outlined how MIF had taken strong steps into the digital realm from the 2017 Festival onwards. He reported that MIF had been able to use this experience to adapt quickly in response to the pandemic, making the digital content a year-round-offer, rather than being specific to the Festival period, and both commissioning big, international artists for online projects and promoting local and up-and-coming artists. He advised that this would now be a permanent part of MIF's work. He reported that, in light of climate change, international festivals were re-thinking their approach and that part of this involved having work available online. He informed Members that consideration was also being given to air travel, sets and the impact of shipping materials for the Festival. He advised that, although MIF did commission international artists, a lot of this involved making work in the city, for example getting artists to work with local communities over a few weeks, rather than flying them in for a couple of days for a show. He highlighted the "What is the City but the People?" show from the 2017 Festival which had involved 100 local people and was now a touring show, advising that when it toured internationally only one person needed to travel with it as it was made with local people in the city it was visiting.

Decision

To thank the guests from MIF for attending and for their work.

CESC/21/48 Age Friendly Recovery

The Committee received a report of the Consultant in Public Health (Ageing Well Lead), following on from the report to the Committee in December 2020 which had outlined a set of proposals across five key areas that were designed to help address the barriers many of Manchester's mid to later life residents reported that they faced. This report detailed the progress to date and plans for the next 18 months.

The main points and themes within the report included:

- Ageism;
- Care homes;
- Neighbourhoods;
- Employment; and
- Our Manchester.

The Lead Member for Age Friendly Manchester (AFM) outlined how older people had been particularly affected by the pandemic. He also highlighted the positive work that was being done, as detailed in the report, and the need to continue to address these issues.

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

- The condition of pavements and the disproportionate impact of this on older people;
- Digital exclusion among older people;
- The importance of good bus services;
- The specific needs of older LGBT people;
- The role of “Friends of” groups in the Age Friendly parks work;
- Ensuring that the skills development work matched the skills that employers were looking for; and
- The importance of tackling social isolation.

The Age Friendly Programme Lead agreed with the Member’s comment about pavements. He highlighted the age friendly navigation plans which were being piloted in four neighbourhoods and which aimed to identify what routes people took around the neighbourhoods and what enabled and what hindered older people’s access. He advised that the condition of pavements had been highlighted as an issue in one or two of these plans and that this information had been fed back to the Neighbourhoods Directorate. He welcomed the Member’s suggestion of an equalities approach to pavement maintenance and improvement decisions. He suggested that walking and talking with older residents going around their neighbourhood could highlight different issues than officers on their own might identify. He stated that parking on pavements was also an issue and that more work was needed to address this, focusing more on increasing people’s awareness of the problems this caused than on enforcement. The Chair expressed the Committee’s strong support for work to improve the condition of pavements and ensure that they were free from obstructions, such as cars and advertising boards, and for this to be treated as an equalities issue.

The Age Friendly Programme Lead advised that the AFM Board recommended that access to services should not be digital by default, and that non-digital options should be available; however, he informed Members that a lot of work had taken place during lockdown about improving digital access, not just access to devices but also the skills and the confidence to use them and that Libraries had an important role in this.

The Age Friendly Programme Lead informed the Committee about work to influence the Greater Manchester plans for public transport to ensure the inclusion of an age friendly perspective and detailed work taking place around route planning which would assist with trying to get the best deal for older people. The Executive Member for Health and Care supported the Member’s comments about the importance of public transport and emphasised the importance of ensuring that the perspective of older people was represented in the future plans.

In response to the question about LGBT older people, the Age Friendly Programme Lead informed Members about the Pride in Ageing initiative, a representative from which was on the AFM Board, and about the LGBT Extra Care Scheme in Whalley Range. He confirmed that “Friends of” groups were central to work in parks, including being involved in audits, looking at how parks were used.

The Age Friendly Programme Lead advised that a lot of the work outlined in the report, particularly the work within neighbourhoods, was about providing older people

with opportunities to get out and re-connect with people. He informed Members about older people-led organisations which had changed their ways of working since the start of the pandemic to find ways to engage with people who had been remaining in their own home since the start of the pandemic. The Lead Member for AFM advised that social isolation had been an issue for many older people before the pandemic and had been exacerbated by the pandemic and that addressing this was a thread that ran through all the work outlined in the report. He also advised that the voluntary groups referred to played an important role in reaching socially isolated older people but that they did not reach all people, with some parts of the city having better coverage than others, and that some communities of interest were less likely to be in touch with these groups, although they could have their own community groups. He also highlighted the role of Councillors in referring people who were socially isolated to relevant groups.

The Age Friendly Programme Lead informed the Committee about work relating to employment and skills, advising that the Work and Skills Team engaged with employers which gave them an understanding of the skills that were required.

Decision

To note the Committee's strong support for work to improve the condition of pavements and ensure that they are free from obstructions and for this to be treated as an equalities issue.

CESC/21/49 The Impact Of Climate Change As It Relates To The Responsibilities For The Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee

The Committee received a report of the City Solicitor which aimed to provide an update to the report that came to the Committee in June 2021 for further discussion to enable the Committee to consider further areas within their responsibility where the impact of climate change was of particular relevance and for the Committee to identify areas within its remit it would like to receive more information on and debate further.

The main points and themes within the report included:

- Community engagement;
- Culture sector and voluntary sector;
- Libraries' contribution to Climate Change Emergency;
- Leisure and sport; and
- A framework for considering climate change.

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

- The retrofitting of business premises, which was not covered by Government schemes;
- The environmental impact of major events and mitigation measures to reduce this, while also recognising the importance of continuing with events such as the Wythenshawe Games;

- How the Sustainable Events Guide was used and how the Council could use its powers, for example when authorising events or allowing its facilities to be used for them, to influence the sustainability of events organised by external organisations, as well as reducing the carbon footprint of its own events;
- To suggest that Manchester City Football Club be invited to a future meeting to tell the Committee how it was responding to the Climate Emergency;
- Funding made available to improve the environmental impact of the taxi sector;
- How to engage with local communities on climate change, including the role of schools; and
- The importance of good public transport in reducing car use.

The Chair informed Members that Manchester City Football Club had previously delivered a report to the Council, although not to this Committee. He advised that it was useful to hear what partner organisations within the city were doing to address climate change and that he would discuss this with the Chair of the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee. Bearing in mind that business premises cut across the remit of other scrutiny committees, the Chair suggested that the Committee could look at the retrofitting and environmental impact of the Council's leisure estate.

The Executive Member for the Environment advised that the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee had recently received a report on the culture sector and events and that she would share this report with the Committee. She also suggested that the Committee could look at ward-based climate change action plans at a future meeting. The Chair advised that he would be speaking to the Chair of the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee about this.

Decisions

1. To receive a report on retrofitting and improving the sustainability of the Council's leisure estate.
2. To receive a report on the environmental impact of events and what can be done to minimise this impact.
3. To receive a report on what can be done to make the city's taxi fleet more environmentally sustainable.
4. To recognise that Members need to look at their local climate change action plans and identify what support and resources are needed to achieve these.

CESC/21/50 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 that, when the Committee received a report on a particular

equality strand, that this included consideration of how other equality strands intersected with it. The Chair supported this comment.

Decision

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

Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2021

Present:

Councillor Russell (Chair) – in the Chair
Councillors Ahmed Ali, Andrews, Clay, Davies, Hitchen, Kirkpatrick, Lanchbury, B Priest, Robinson, A Simcock, Wheeler and Wright

Also present:

Councillor Craig, Deputy Leader (Finance)
Councillor White, Executive Member for Employment and Housing

Apologies:

Councillors Rowles

RGSC/21/45 Minutes

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2021 as a correct record.

RGSC/21/46 Spending Review and budget update

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer and City Solicitor, that provided an update on the main announcements from the Spending Review 27 October 2021 with a focus on the implications for local government funding, what this meant for the Council's budget position and the proposed budget process.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- The Council was forecasting an estimated shortfall of £4m in 2022/23, £64m in 2023/24 and £85m by 2024/25;
- A summary of all Spending Review Announcements;
- The Corporate Core priorities and budget; and
- The Commercial & Operations priorities and budget.

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

- That the current Government was committed to cutting public service funding;
- The failure of Government to invest in initiatives to address climate change;
- The failure of Government to adequately address the issue of funding Adult Social Care, noting the significant pressure this placed on the Council's budget;
- The statement within the report that read 'the Council has borne the brunt of local government cuts and if it had seen funding cuts in line with an average Council it

would have £85m a year more in funding than it currently has.' should be made explicit to the residents of the city;

- Further information on the £50.6m of risk-based reserves was requested;
- How would the reduced airport dividend be accounted for;
- An explanation was sought in relation to the reported lower number of Council Tax exemptions and the reported fewer than anticipated Council Tax Support claimants;
- All opportunities to address empty properties using the Council Tax scheme should be utilised;
- Noting the national investment announcements, how much of this funding would be directed to Manchester;
- How would the City Region Sustainable Transport award benefit Manchester residents;
- Would there be any new additional funding released to Local Authorities to support the activities and pressures realised as a result of the pandemic; and
- What impact did inflation and interest rate increases have on the budget.

The Deputy Leader (Finance) said that it was important to consider the budget in the context of ten years of imposed austerity and continued reductions in public sector spending, in addition to the impact of COVID-19. She stated that the Local Government Finance Settlement was expected mid to late December and the outcome and budget implications would be reported back to the January meeting of this Committee. She concluded by stating that the ongoing piecemeal approach to Local Government Funding was inappropriate and that Manchester would continue to lobby for a fairer, long term arrangement to help support and deliver the strategic ambitions of the Council and improve the outcomes for Manchester residents.

The Deputy City Treasurer responded to questions by stating that all commercial income had been impacted by COVID-19, adding that the Airport dividend was applied retrospectively and this had been used to support a significant amount of work delivered during the pandemic. He described that prudential budgetary assumptions were made, hence the reported £50.6m of risk-based reserves. He further described that the estimated Council Tax surplus of £6.9m was accounted for in part due to the collection rate being better than anticipated. He stated that the reduced number in student exemptions was also due to students not moving into properties during the pandemic and undertaking online tuition. With regard to the levels of Council Tax Support he stated that the budget for this had not been reduced, however the demand on the scheme was not as high as anticipated.

The Deputy City Treasurer advised that Transport for Greater Manchester were working on the delivery of schemes to improve connectivity for Manchester residents, noting the City Region Sustainable Transport award. He commented that these plans included decarbonising public transport and the conversations regarding the redevelopment of Piccadilly station and HS2 were ongoing. In response to the specific question regarding additional COVID-19 funding he advised that no additional funding would be made

available, adding that any COVID-19 budget related legacies would be identified through the budget setting process.

The Deputy City Treasurer stated that budget planning assumptions and modelling had been calculated to accommodate inflationary pressures and borrowing using higher interest rates. He commented that a rise in inflation rates impacted on vulnerable residents which in turn impacted on the demand of Council services.

Decision

The Committee notes the report.

RGSC/21/47 An update on the delivery of savings approved in 2021/22

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer, that provided an update on the delivery of savings that were identified for the 2021/22 Financial Year.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- The 2021/22 budget approved by Council included approved savings of £40.717m in 2021/22 across 86 initiatives, increasing to £47.704m by 2024/25;
- The current position for each directorate; and
- Conclusions.

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

- Did the reported reduction in Full Time Equivalent (FTE) posts impact on the delivery of front line services;
- Was the ambitions to promote car journeys into the city centre contrary to the ambitions of the Climate Emergency;
- The need to undertake Equality Impact Assessments for any proposed changes as a result of the budget;
- Information was sought as to the number of families and single people in temporary homeless accommodation, noting the wider cost to public services that arise as a direct result of homelessness and a policy of invest to save should be adopted when agreeing the homelessness budget;
- Noting that the Government had decided not to continue funding the Everyone In homelessness scheme; and
- Why was the planned lease break for a building not actioned in 2021/22.

In reply the Deputy City Treasurer stated that any reduction in FTE posts had not impacted on the delivery of front-line services, adding these posts were 'back office' posts and was in keeping with the approach and model to delivering customer services. He commented that Equality Impact Assessments are always undertaken as part of any service redesign consideration. He stated that the issue of car parking needed to be

considered in the context of wider strategic plans and ambitions for the city, making reference to the Mobility Hub to be delivered in Ancoats.

The Chair requested that information on how Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) were used was included in future budget reports to the Committee. The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer commented that a wide range of data was used when considering all budget options and proposals in addition to EIAs, these included the State of the City Report and local ward data.

In regard to the issue of Homelessness the Executive Member for Housing and Employment stated that he would request that the data on the numbers of families and single people accessing temporary accommodation is circulated following the meeting. The Interim Director of Housing Operations stated that when considering the Homelessness Budget the emphasis was given to targeted investment to prevent incidents of homelessness recognising the comment from the Member regarding the additional demands on other services. The City Solicitor commented that a report on Homelessness would be considered by the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee at their December meeting.

The Deputy City Treasurer said that the issue relating to the lease break arose as a result of a timing issue and the building in question was still being used to accommodate staff returning to the office and the need to maintain social distancing. He advised that the building would be exited at the next break. In response to a question relating to income generation he said that options to maximise this were always considered and reviewed.

Decision

The Committee notes the report.

RGSC/21/47 Housing Revenue Account Business Plan

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer, that provided an update on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) business plan following the bringing back in house of Northwards Housing the Arm's Length Management Organisation (ALMO) that used to manage the Council's housing stock. It also provides an update on transition progress including updated governance arrangements and workforce update.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background to the Housing Revenue Account;
- Information in relation to annual rents; and
- Progress of the transition of Northwards into MCC, with a specific focus on governance and workforce.

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

- Urgent clarification was sought as to the remit and responsibility of the proposed Board to be chaired by the Executive Member of Neighbourhoods;
- Noting the improved communications with ward Members from the Executive Member and officers;
- The need to acknowledge that not all Northwards properties sat in what were traditionally referred to north Manchester wards;
- Requesting that all relevant ward Members had a standing invitation to meetings of the Board and had access to all relevant Board papers;
- It had been a previous recommendation of this Committee that there should be an independent member appointed to the Board;
- Would there be any change in the delivery of service as a result of the Equans contract to provide the repairs and maintenance service to Northwards' residents; and
- Welcoming the previous decision taken by the Council to continue with the Housing Revenue Account and supporting the decision to bring Northwards Housing back in-house.

The Director of Housing Operations noted the comments regarding the Board and stated that he would confer with colleagues to clarify the position and arrangements, including proposed timelines and this would be reported back to the Committee. The Deputy Leader (Finance) acknowledged the comments from the Committee and reassured Members that this would be clarified.

The Director of Housing Operations advised that tenants should expect no change in standards or service as a result of the Equans contract award and due diligence measures were applied to all contracts.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer responded to questions from the Chair regarding issues relating to retrofitting and fire safety works, by advising that work was ongoing regarding the capital programme of work and an update report would be provided to the Committee at the appropriate time.

Decision

The Committee request a report be brought back to its meeting in December 2021 that provides greater clarity on the proposed remit and responsibility of the Board.

RGSC/21/48 Overview Report

The Committee considered the report by the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit which provided details of key decisions that fall within the Committee's remit and an update on actions resulting from the Committee's recommendations. The report also includes the Committee's work programme, which the Committee was asked to amend as appropriate and agree.

The Chair requested that the entries provided at section 2 of the Overview Report be reviewed to ensure that all relevant Key Decisions were included.

Following suggestions from Members the Chair stated that she would speak with officers to progress including items on Human Resource and Organizational Development; Section 106, Communications and the Security Service Contract into the Committee's Work Programme. She further noted the comments during consideration of the previous agenda item regarding clarification being provided in relation to the governance arrangements and the proposed Board to be chaired by the Executive Member of Neighbourhoods.

Decision

To note the overview report and agree the Committee's Work Programme, noting the comments above.

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2021

Present:

Councillor Reid – in the Chair
Councillors Abdullatif, Alijah, Bano, Collins, Cooley, Foley, Hewitson, Lovecy, McHale, Nunney and Sadler

Co-opted Voting Members:

Ms Z Derraz, Parent Governor Representative

Co-opted Non-Voting Members:

Mr L Duffy, Secondary Sector Teacher Representative

Also present:

Councillor Craig, Deputy Leader (Finance)
Councillor Bridges, Executive Member for Children's Services

CYP/21/50 Minutes

Decision

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2021.

CYP/21/51 Children and Education Services Directorate Budget 2022/23

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director of Children and Education Services which stated that, following the Spending Review announcements and other updates, the Council was forecasting an estimated shortfall of £4m in 2022/23, £64m in 2023/24 and £85m by 2024/25. This report set out the high-level position. Officers had identified options to balance the budget in 2022/23 which were subject to approval.

The main points and themes within the report included:

- Current budget position;
- Headline priorities for the service;
- Indicative revenue budget; and
- Capital budget and pipeline priorities.

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

- The likelihood of getting any government grants to assist with decarbonisation, to ask that the report on climate change and schools which had been requested for the January meeting include whether funding would be available to help schools with this and also a request for an update on retrofitting and solar panels;

- Home school transport;
- That the Council should look at schools which were underspending on their budget;
- Concern about the underfunding of the High Needs Block from the Government; and
- To recognise the progress that had been made by Children's Services, including fewer children coming into care, which was beneficial for the children and for the service's budget.

The Chair suggested that the Committee receive a report on Home School Transport at a future meeting. The Director of Education explained the eligibility criteria for Home School Transport and the challenges facing this provision. She advised that the Council would be reviewing its policy on this in co-production with parents and carers. The Chair also requested that the Committee receive a report on homeless families being placed in bed and breakfast accommodation outside of the city and the impact of this, such as the higher costs of home school transport.

The Director of Education advised that there were a number of individual grants available to schools relating to decarbonisation and that the Council was undertaking a piece of work which included bringing all that information together in one place. She informed the Committee about a report being considered at the next meeting of the Schools Forum on undertaking condition surveys of school buildings for local authority-maintained schools, including factors such as energy efficiency. She advised that this would be a basis from which the Council could understand the current position and look at how the capital maintenance budget could be used most effectively and could also be used to provide targeted advice to schools on grants that they could apply for to undertake the work identified by the survey.

The Deputy Director of Children's Services recognised the improvements in quality of practice while also drawing Members' attention to challenges from an increasing population, the number of children needing referral from Early Help into statutory services and the medium to long term impacts from the pandemic.

Decisions

1. To request a report on Home School Transport.
2. To request a report on homeless families, in particular families being placed outside of the city and the impact of this.

CYP/21/52 Adoption Counts – Regional Adoption Agency

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director (Children and Education Services) which sought approval to formally and permanently transfer staff from Manchester into Stockport Council (the host organisation) under TUPE regulations. The report explained that in 2015, the Government had announced its intention to legislate to ensure that all local authority adoption services had merged with neighbouring services to form larger regional adoption agencies (RAA) and that, in 2017, the Senior Management Team (SMT), Executive Member for Children's and Education Services and Executive had supported a proposal from the Strategic

Director of Children's Services for Manchester's adoption service to merge with four other local authorities (Stockport, Trafford, Salford, and Cheshire East) and two voluntary adoption agencies (Adoption Matters and Caritas) to form a regional adoption agency which was known as 'Adoption Counts'. It stated that Stockport had been nominated as the host organisation for the regional adoption agency, and it was agreed in 2017 to temporarily second adoption staff from Manchester, Trafford, Salford and Cheshire East into Stockport whilst the RAA was established and developed.

The main points and themes within the report included:

- Objectives of the Regional Adoption Agency;
- The structure of the Regional Adoption Agency;
- Reporting and governance;
- Performance of the Regional Adoption Agency;
- Workforce implications;
- Legal implications - contractual arrangements;
- Information Technology;
- Commissioning;
- Risks/mitigation; and
- Financial implications.

The Executive Member for Children's Services advised that information appeared to demonstrate that Adoption Counts was delivering positive outcomes for Manchester's children and that it, therefore, made sense to move to these more formal arrangements.

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

- The benefits of a regional adoption agency which broadened the search for suitable adoptive parents for Our Children;
- Whether staff's views would be taken into consideration, given that the staff consultation was taking place after Executive approval had been sought; and
- Whether Manchester staff would need to adapt to a different work culture if they transferred to Stockport Council.

The Deputy Director of Children's Services assured Members that there was a well-established HR protocol relating to staff consultation and advised that staff concerns often related to their individual circumstances, which would be taken into consideration. He reported that Adoption Counts had been operating since 2017, with Manchester staff having been seconded to the service since then, and that staff would remain on Manchester City Council's terms and conditions so he did not anticipate that this transfer would create many cultural issues. He informed the Committee that staff could also choose not to transfer to Stockport and instead to be found an alternative position within Manchester City Council. In response to a question from the Chair, he advised that Stockport's HR and back office support had been very good, although he did not have the information on how Stockport had been chosen as the hosting organisation from 2017.

The Chair requested that the Committee receive a report on adoption at a future meeting which included what difference the move to Adoption Counts had made in providing stable adoption placements for Our Children and what happened when an adoption broke down.

Decisions

1. To receive a report on adoption at a future meeting which included what difference the move to Adoption Counts has made in providing stable adoption placements for Our Children and what happens when an adoption breaks down.
2. To endorse the recommendation that the Executive is recommended to agree to the adoption service for MCC being integrated into the Regional Adoption Agency 'Adoption Counts', approve the transfer of the service and note that staff who are assigned to the service will transfer to Stockport under TUPE regulations.

CYP/21/53 COVID-19 Update

The Committee received a verbal update of the Director of Education which outlined new developments and significant changes to the current situation, particularly in relation to schools.

The main points and themes within the verbal update included:

- School attendance remained strong and significantly above the national average;
- The number of positive cases was relatively stable and lower than elsewhere but still a concern;
- That the Council had recommended enhanced measures in schools and colleges to reduce the risk of transmission and this would be reviewed on a fortnightly basis; and
- Arrangements for and progress with the roll-out of vaccinations for 12 to 15 year olds.

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

- Had there been any anti-vaccine protests outside schools in Manchester and what plans were in place for this;
- That some parents were not against vaccines but had some concerns about their children being vaccinated and what were the plans for providing information and reassurance to them; and
- Days of education lost due to the pandemic and the impact of this, particularly on pupils who were struggling academically or displaying behavioural problems.

In response to a Member's question about face coverings, the Director of Education

reported that schools were currently being advised that pupils should wear face coverings in communal areas but not in the classroom and that special schools had been included in this advice, although some pupils would be exempt. She stated that this advice was considered to be proportionate, based on the current situation and had been arrived at in consultation with the Director of Public Health. She reported that she was not aware of any anti-vaccine campaigns outside of Manchester schools but that schools had been sent some guidance on dealing with this if there was a protest which was creating a problem, such as causing an obstruction. She advised that a lot of information had been provided to parents about the vaccine, primarily through schools. She also advised that, while vaccines were being provided at schools, parents also had the option of having their child vaccinated at another site at a later date, to give them more time to discuss it and reach a decision. The Director of Public Health informed Members that parents had the opportunity to further discuss any concerns they had at these other vaccination sites and that they could also call the COVID-19 helpline. In response to a Member's question, he outlined the reasons for the vaccination booster programme and who was eligible for this.

The Director of Education advised that further information on the impact of the pandemic on children's education would be provided in the next agenda item but that schools were working to address this, tailored to what their pupils needed. She advised that this was partly about helping pupils to re-adjust to being back in the school routine, rather than trying to cram a lot of learning into a short space of time. A Member who was a Teacher Representative supported this comment.

In response to a Member's question, the Director of Education advised that schools were struggling with staff absences, for a range of reasons including staff testing positive with COVID-19, other illnesses, childcare issues caused by the pandemic and unvaccinated staff being close contacts of positive cases and having to self-isolate. The Chair requested that some figures on this be provided in a future update.

The Director of Education acknowledged a point from the Chair that some families were unclear on the changes in the rules which meant that other children in the household could still attend school if a family member had tested positive. She reported that information was being sent out to families but that there could also be other issues such as problems in getting a child to school if all the adults in the household had tested positive and had to self-isolate.

Members discussed ways that information could be communicated to parents, including billboards, social media and government public health campaigns. A Member emphasised the value of face-to-face meetings to communicate information on issues such as vaccines and the current rules on self-isolation. The Executive Member for Children's Services advised that work was taking place on vaccine take-up for both adults and children in Manchester and that this included a communications plan. Noting that those leading the school age vaccination programme had attended last month's meeting when this work had still been at an early stage, he suggested that they attend a future meeting to inform Members about the progress made.

Decision

To note the report.

CYP/21/54 COVID-19 in Manchester School-Age Children, and Across Manchester School Settings: a retrospective analysis of academic year 2020/21

The Committee received a report of the Director of Public Health which provided a data-driven retrospective analysis of the academic year 2020/21 in Manchester. The report explored the impact of COVID-19 on school settings across Manchester, levels of school absence, and confirmed cases in school-age children resident in the city.

The main points and themes within the report included:

- National context;
- Manchester Test and Trace;
- COVID-19 Situational Awareness Explorer; and
- Findings.

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

- Whether the new lateral flow testing kits which only required a nasal swab encouraged more people to use them;
- That it was important not to forget the impact that the pandemic had had on two years of children and young people's education as things returned to greater normality and to ensure that those who had been most affected were not disadvantaged in future; and
- The impact on children who had transitioned to high school this year and young people who had been awarded GCSE grades through teacher assessment and might be struggling with A-level or other college courses.

The Director of Education agreed that the impact of the pandemic on children and their education was a longer term issue and shared Members' concern about this not being recognised and responded to in future years. She advised Members that part of the reason for publishing the report had been to demonstrate this impact and that this information had also been shared with Manchester schools. She highlighted the impact on Early Years and school readiness and advised that this age group needed to be monitored, ensuring they were meeting developmental milestones and were given the opportunity to develop basic social skills which they might have missed out on. In response to a Member's question, she outlined the support available to Early Years settings. Regarding children entering Year 7 and post-16 education, she advised that Manchester had excellent schools and colleges which had been working hard to support children and young people transitioning during this period. She advised that, where young people were not on the right course for them, the post-16 providers supported them to find the best option for them, such as reducing the number of A-levels they were taking, changing courses or moving to a different setting, where appropriate. She reported that larger institutions also had Career Connect staff on site. She advised that schools and post-16 providers had a point of contact within the Education Service for advice and support and, where particular

themes were emerging, the service addressed this strategically. The Chair noted the number of Ofsted inspections which had been initiated in recent weeks and expressed concern about whether Ofsted would take into consideration the impact of the last two years.

The Director of Public Health informed Members that at present both the old-style and new-style tests were being used. He reported that it appeared that a lot of people were testing themselves but not recording the results online and that the easier tests and the importance of registering the results would be promoted to the public. In response to a Member's question, the Public Health Specialist (Health Intelligence) advised that the reasons some people did not record their test results included lack of IT skills and the time it took to do it, especially if you were registering results for multiple children. He advised that he would look into the data on uptake of the new-style tests in comparison to the old-style tests. The Programme Lead for Contact Tracing reported that some people did not want to register a positive test because of the requirements for self-isolation and she emphasised that there was a dedicated local team to support people who were required to self-isolate, offering financial and non-financial support for the household.

In response to a request from a Member that the communications about testing and the vaccination of children be reviewed, the Director of Public Health advised that his team would progress this, looking at how messages could be targeted more effectively. He reported they were also lobbying for better national public health campaigns. The Chair recognised the work of Neighbourhoods staff who had carried out door to door engagement with residents in areas with low vaccine take-up. A Member advised that it was important to provide information in community languages and to use social media platforms that young people used.

Decision

That the Committee will continue to look at the longer-term impacts of the pandemic on children and their education.

CYP/21/55 Overview Report

A report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit was submitted. The overview report contained key decisions within the Committee's remit, responses to previous recommendations and the Committee's work programme, which the Committee was asked to approve.

The Chair thanked Mr Duffy for his many years of service as a Co-opted Member, as this was his last meeting. She also reminded Members about the Ofsted Subgroup meeting that was taking place on 24 November 2021 and asked any other Members who wanted to join the Subgroup to let the Scrutiny Support Officer know. She advised that she would discuss the work programme with officers after the meeting.

A Member requested that report authors indicate what elements of their report related to the city's zero carbon ambitions or, where this was not relevant, state this in the Environmental Impact Assessment section of the report, to demonstrate that this had been considered.

Decision

To note the report and agree the work programme, subject to the above comments.