

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Executive – 15 December 2021

Subject: Our Manchester Progress Update

Report of: The Chief Executive

Summary

The report provides an update on key areas of progress against the Our Manchester Strategy – Forward to 2025 which resets Manchester’s priorities for the next five years to ensure we can still achieve the city’s ambition set out in the Our Manchester Strategy 2016 – 2025

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to note the update provided in the report.

Wards Affected - All

Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the decisions proposed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city
N/A

Our Manchester Strategy outcomes	Contribution to the strategy
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	The work to reset the Our Manchester Strategy considered all five of the Strategy’s existing themes to ensure the city achieves its aims. The themes are retained within the final reset Strategy, Forward to 2025.
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city’s economic success	
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	

A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	
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Full details are in the body of the report, along with any implications for

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Risk Management
- Legal Considerations

Financial Consequences – Revenue

None

Financial Consequences – Capital

None

Contact Officers:

Name: Joanne Roney OBE, Chief Executive
Position: Chief Executive
Telephone: 0161 2343006
E-mail: Joanne.Roney@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Alun Ireland
Position: Head of Strategic Communications
Telephone: 0161 2343006
E-mail: Alun.Ireland@manchester.gov.uk

Background documents (available for public inspection):

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy please contact one of the contact officers above.

Executive Report – 17th February 2021 - Our Manchester Strategy – Forward to 2025

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This is the sixth in an ongoing series of reports highlighting examples of areas where strong progress is being made against key strategic themes identified in the Our Manchester Strategy.

2. Stevenson Square

- 2.1 A consultation concludes on Tuesday 21 December into plans to pedestrianise Stevenson Square in the Northern Quarter, with the intention of making it one of the most attractive destinations in the city.
- 2.2 The proposals build on previous consultations about the space which have established that people want to see the full pedestrianisation of the square, a traffic-free space which they can move through easily, somewhere they can also choose to sit and relax and somewhere which retains and contributes to the distinctive character of the Northern Quarter through elements such as public art, outdoor dining and green planted areas.
- 2.3 Among the key changes proposed are new trees, contributing to the wider City of Trees project; new seating and a sustainable drainage system. Under the proposals a new two-way cycle lane, running through the square at the same level as the pavement, would also feature.

More details about the consultation can be found at www.manchester.gov.uk/consultations

Relates to Our Manchester strategy themes:

*Thriving and Sustainable City
Liveable and Zero Carbon City
Connected City*

3. New children's library at Central

- 3.1 Manchester Central Library's new jungle-themed children's library opened at the end of November.
- 3.2 The design of the new look facility - which includes crawl-through spaces, wildlife wall art, new book display cases and a cosy corner where parents and their children can sit together to read – is inspired by feedback from Manchester families about what they wanted in a survey conducted last year.
- 3.3 It is the latest example of the investment which is taking place to regenerate libraries across the city.

Relates to Our Manchester strategy themes:

*Progressive and Equitable City
Highly Skilled City*

4. Our Town Hall project

- 4.1 The painstaking restoration and repair of Manchester Town Hall will be under the spotlight in a new documentary to be broadcast later this month.
- 4.2 The Our Town Hall project is the subject of an episode of the series Great British Landmark Fixers which will be shown on the Yesterday channel at 8pm on Monday 20 December 2021.
- 4.3 The programme looks behind the scenes at work taking place in the Town Hall, which at 144 years old is in need of an array of careful repairs to preserve its heritage from the ravages of time and ensure that it remains at the centre of civic life for many decades to come. It features some of the people dedicating years of their working lives to the project, which will be completed in 2024, and notes that the project's legacy will not just be in protecting and enhancing the building itself but in helping a new generation of Mancunians learn heritage and construction skills.

Relates to Our Manchester strategy themes:

*Highly Skilled City
Thriving and Sustainable City*

5. Our Rivers, Our City strategy

- 5.1 A strategy to revitalise Manchester's river valleys and put them at the heart of the city's regenerations was launched on Tuesday 7 December.
- 5.2 The *Our Rivers, Our City* strategy, which covers up a period up to 2030, aims to make Manchester's three rivers – the Irk in the north of the city, the Medlock in the centre and the Mersey in the south – a vital part of its future, not simply part of its heritage. That means boosting their biodiversity and cleanliness, ensuring they are managed in a way which helps prevent and reduce flooding and contributes to the city's wider zero carbon goals and recognising them as an asset which can play a vital role in the character of new neighbourhoods such as Victoria North, where 15,000 new homes are being built over the next 15-20 years.
- 5.3 The strategy, co-ordinated by Manchester City Council, is a culmination of 18 months of work which has included seeking the views of the public and other partners. Strikingly, 90% of those surveyed said they want Manchester's rivers to be a real focus of the city.
- 5.4 Its five main aims are to improve the quality and functioning of the city's river valleys and their catchments; to ensure river valleys and sustainable drainage are key components of new developments; improve the accessibility of river valley; promote the wider benefits of river valley and improve flood management and risk mitigation.

- 5.5 Manchester's rivers are already coming out of the shadows. For instance, a previously culverted 350m stretch of the Medlock will form the centrepiece of the new Mayfield Park and a City River Park, following the course of the Irk from the city centre to Queen's Park will be at the heart of the Victoria North development.
- 5.6 Partners in the strategy include Manchester City Council, United Utilities, the Environment Agency and Natural England and community and third sector organisations.
- 5.7 The strategy has been funded by the GrowGreen project which is an EU Horizon 2020 programme for Research and Innovation to create climate and water resilient, healthy, and liveable cities by investing in "nature-based solutions." Alongside our partner cities in Valencia, Wroclaw (Poland), Brest, Zadar (Croatia) and Modena; Manchester is working to review and refresh our Green Infrastructure Strategy as part of the ambition of GrowGreen to accelerate and upscale the uptake and understanding of nature-based solutions.

Relates to Our Manchester strategy themes:

*Liveable and Zero Carbon City
Thriving and Sustainable City
Connected City*

6. West Gorton Community Park

- 6.1 West Gorton Community Park has won a prestigious environmental design award from the Landscape Institute.
- 6.2 The park, nicknamed 'sponge park' thanks to the way it soaks up excess water, the community park – designed by architects BDP in partnership with Manchester City Council – won the prize for Excellence in Flood and Water Management at the Landscape Institute Awards 2021.
- 6.3 Situated in the heart of the West Gorton, the park is first and foremost a place for the community to use and enjoy but West Gorton Community Park's innovative design shows how nature-based solutions can help combat the impacts of climate change. Some of the park's specialist features include: The widespread use of water-loving plants and design features which help capture excess water from nearby roads and slow the rate at which it flows into drains; Swales, shallow trenches planted with aquatic vegetation which store and help absorb excess surface water; Rain gardens – attractive low level, wildlife-friendly spaces (which water naturally runs into) filled with thirsty plants which can handle being waterlogged and bioretention tree pits – designed to receive stormwater and store it for gradual absorption through the root system.

Relates to Our Manchester strategy themes:

*Liveable and Zero Carbon City
Thriving and Sustainable City*

7. Victoria North

- 7.1 A planning application was submitted last month to begin the process of making the Red Bank neighbourhood in north Manchester ready for development, bringing a large swathe of brownfield land back into productive use.
- 7.2 This initial phase of works has been made possible through a £51.6m funding award from the government's Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF), which will address a series of infrastructure constraints and allow the delivery of new homes and green spaces, including the first phase of a new City River Park within the Red Bank neighbourhood – part of the wider Victoria North programme of development.
- 7.3 The application includes a commitment to increase biodiversity by at least 10% as a result of the overall development.
- 7.4 Red Bank will see the delivery of up to 5,500 new homes across a range of types and tenures, including affordable homes, as well as supporting social and community infrastructure. This includes key improvements to walking, cycling and public transport routes, creating an accessible and highly sustainable community, close to the city centre.
- 7.5 Red Bank is one of seven neighbourhoods that make up the Victoria North regeneration area – one of the biggest renewal projects the city has ever undertaken. The area is currently characterised by underused brownfield land – with the largest brownfield site being the 25-acre former Red Bank carriage sidings – which closed for rail use in the late 1980s, and which has often been blighted by fly-tipping and anti-social behaviour.
- 7.6 Victoria North is a joint venture programme between Manchester City Council and developer Far East Consortium (FEC). Over the next 15 to 20 years, the Victoria North project will deliver more than 15,000 new homes (at least 20% of which will be affordable housing), with each neighbourhood connected by high quality green spaces and 46-hectare City River Park, which will open up and celebrate the Irk River Valley for the first time in decades.

Relates to Our Manchester strategy themes:

*Thriving and Sustainable City
Liveable and Zero Carbon City
Progressive and Equitable City
Connected City*

8. Our Year

- 8.1 Manchester businesses have been invited to get behind the city's year-long campaign to create and celebrate opportunities for its young people.
- 8.2 The 2022: Our Year campaign aims to create an array of activities, opportunities and experiences for the city's children and young people and create a legacy which will make Manchester one of the best places for young people to grow up in. It is hoped to secure UNICEF Child Friendly City status.
- 8.3 It is recognised that the pandemic period has been particularly difficult for the city's children, especially those who were already experiencing inequalities.
- 8.4 Businesses are being asked to pledge their support and demonstrate their commitment to social value by signing up for one of a range of sponsorship packages, from £5k to £50k to help deliver activities for children and young people.
- 8.5 The private sector can also make donations in kind such as play, sports or ICT equipment, free tickets for events, vouchers for experiences, volunteer hours, events or storage space and work experience.
- 8.6 A launch of the campaign to the wider public is scheduled for January, with further details to be released in the new year. For more information about 2022: Our Year visit www.ouryear.uk

Related Our Manchester strategy themes:

*Progressive and Equitable City
Thriving and Sustainable City
Highly Skilled City*

9. Tree Action MCR

- 9.1 The second year of a two-year project to plant at least 2,000 trees across Manchester got underway with its first plantings on Monday 13 December, an avenue of 18 English oak trees alongside the tram track in Heaton Park.
- 9.2 More than 1,000 trees were planted across Manchester in the first year of the £1m Tree Action MCR programme in 15 wards identified as having the lowest tree cover with around 1,200 more set to be planted in the remainder of wards with suitable locations in the coming months, including four new community orchards.
- 9.3 The trees will contribute to the national Queen's Green Canopy campaign, for which Greater Manchester is a champion city region, which is encouraging tree planting to mark the Queen's platinum (70 year) jubilee on the throne in 2022.

- 9.4 Tree species have been carefully chosen for their resilience to climate change, ability to store carbon and biodiversity benefits. As well as their visual appeal, they also help improve air quality.
- 9.5 The wards which will benefit from year two of Tree Action MCR are: Baguley, Brooklands; Clayton and Openshaw; Gorton and Abbey Hey; Miles Platting and Newton Heath; Moss Side; Old Moat; Withington and Woodhouse Park.
- 9.6 Wards featured in first year of planting were Ancoats and Beswick, Ardwick, Cheetham, Clayton and Openshaw, Gorton and Abbey Hey, Miles Platting and Newton Heath, Moss Side, Old Moat, Withington and Woodhouse Park.

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10. Contributing to a Zero-Carbon City

- 10.1 Achieving Manchester's zero carbon target has been reflected throughout the work on the Our Manchester Strategy reset, with sustainability being a key horizontal theme throughout. Forward to 2025 restates Manchester's commitment to achieving our zero carbon ambition by 2038 at the latest.

11. Contributing to the Our Manchester Strategy

- 11.1 The reset of the Our Manchester Strategy will ensure that the city achieves its Vision. The five themes have been retained in the reset Strategy, with the new priorities streamlined under the themes.

12. Key Policies and Considerations

- 12.1 There are no particular equal opportunities issues, risk management issues, or legal issues that arise from the recommendations in this report.

13. Recommendations

- 13.1 The Executive is requested to note the update provided in the report.