

Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2021

Present:

Councillor Hacking - In the Chair

Councillors Shaukat Ali, Andrews, Connolly, M Dar, Evans, Grimshaw, Hilal, Hussain, Whiston, Wills and Wilson

Also present:

Councillor Rahman, Deputy Leader

Elaine Astley, Breakthrough UK

Apologies:

Councillor Rawson

CESC/21/51 Minutes

The Chair informed the Committee that the Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham, and the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, Baroness Beverley Hughes, would be attending the Committee's next meeting on 11 January 2022 and he suggested that Members discuss beforehand the format of and focus for this agenda item.

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2021 as a correct record.

CESC/21/52 Deep Dive: Disability in Manchester

The Committee received a report of the City Solicitor which provided an overview of the data and activity in Manchester in relation to disability, linked to inequalities in life chances and the impacts of COVID-19. This was one of a series of 'deep dive' reports that the Committee had requested into different aspects of equalities.

The main points and themes within the report included:

- Statistical information relating to disabled people in Manchester;
- Work to improve the life chances of disabled people in Manchester; and
- Celebrating diversity.

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

- That the condition of pavements, and roads, was an equalities issue which disproportionately affected disabled people and some other groups such as older people and that decisions on the prioritisation of repairs and maintenance should take into account equality issues;
- That some consultations were not carried out in a way which was accessible to all Manchester residents;

- The impact of austerity measures on disabled people;
- How accessible was this meeting and its papers for disabled people, including people who were visually impaired and the Deaf community;
- What was being done to increase the number of disabled people in senior positions in the Council;
- That the Council should be using the social model of disability; and
- What was being done to ensure that Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) reflected the impact of proposals on disabled people.

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager advised that her team would link up with Age Friendly Manchester and the Highways service to look at what could be done to improve the condition of pavements and she offered to provide Members with an update on this. She advised that she would also talk to the Communications Team about the accessibility of consultations and would update Members on this.

The Strategic Lead (City Centre Partnerships) advised that the Highways Service and officers in Growth and Development who were working on areas such as the public realm and travel were increasingly taking a more joined-up approach to their work. She outlined the work focusing on a modal shift, encouraging people to walk, cycle and use public transport more, and advised that improving pavements and pedestrianising spaces were key to this. She emphasised the importance of consultations being accessible and advised that she was working with officers to look at how this could be improved.

A Member requested that representatives from the Highways Service be invited to a future meeting to discuss equalities issues relating to pavements and roads, to which the Chair agreed.

The Chair suggested that the question about the accessibility of meetings be raised through Committee Services and the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Group. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager offered to discuss with Committee Services how accessibility could be strengthened.

In response to a Member's question, the Head of Commissioning for Adult Social Care outlined the range of supported housing accommodation that was available both in-house and externally and offered to provide any further information that the Member wanted. She advised that people could also be supported to live independently in their own homes, for example, through adaptations or a care package.

The Strategic Lead (Reform and Innovation) reported that workforce equalities issues were being scrutinised by the Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee and that they had recently looked at the new Workforce Equality Strategy. The Chair stated that the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee had previously received an update on this workforce equality work and suggested that a further update be scheduled.

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager recognised the importance of the social model of disability and informed Members that her team would be looking at how they could increase people's understanding of this. She reported that

strengthening the monitoring and quality assurance of EIAs would be a key priority for her team and she offered to provide further updates on this work. Elaine Astley from Breakthrough UK reported that the Council had adopted the social model of disability over 20 years ago but that, while this approach was still be used in some individual areas, it appeared that the broader understanding of this across all areas of the Council had been lost. She emphasised the importance of the social model of disability being understood across the Council and this approach being embedded across everything the Council was doing, in order to ensure the disabled people were fully included. She cited the example of consultations where, she advised, the Council should be working with disabled people's organisations and disabled people from diverse communities to identify disabling barriers to participating in consultations and identify solutions.

In response to a Member's question about the data in the report, the Strategic Lead (Reform and Innovation) advised that officers had had to use the data which was available to them, which was from multiple sources and, therefore, not consistent; however, she added that work would be taking place next year on the communities of identity report which would enable the Council to obtain qualitative information and a more coherent narrative.

Decisions

1. To recognise the importance of the social model of disability and this approach being embedded across all areas of the Council.
2. To invite representatives from the Highways Service to a future meeting to discuss equalities issues relating to pavements and roads.
3. That the accessibility of meetings be discussed with Committee Services and raised through the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Group.
4. That an update on the work to improve Workforce Equality be scheduled for a future meeting.

[Councillor Wills declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest as an employee of Manchester Metropolitan University.]

CESC/21/53 Compliance and Enforcement Services - Performance in 2020/21

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) which provided an update on demand for and performance of the Compliance and Enforcement Service during 2020/21 including an overview of the service's activities in support of the Council's response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The report also provided a forward look at challenges and future workload pressures as a result of changes to legislation, policy and areas of growth that would have an impact on the work carried out by Compliance and Enforcement teams.

The main points and themes within the report included:

- Overall demand;
- Proactive activity;
- Formal enforcement action;
- COVID-19 response;
- Current challenges and future workload;
- Neighbourhood compliance;
- Food Health and Safety and Airport Team;
- Trading Standards;
- Housing;
- Licensing Out of Hours Team; and
- Environmental Protection Team.

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

- Obstructions on the pavement, such as fruit and vegetable displays and shop signs, and what was being done to address this;
- Cars parking on the pavement;
- To request more information on the review of the approach to inspecting licensed premises;
- Enforcement action against non-Blue Badge holders parking in spaces for Blue Badge holders;
- That the Council should publicise the enforcement action it took to address issues affecting residents;
- Plans in response to the motion passed by Council the previous week relating to drink spiking;
- That there was a perception that enforcement activity was not undertaken consistently and equally across all wards;
- Praise from Members about Compliance Officers within their wards and for the service's work during the pandemic; and
- That there should be a more joined up approach between the Council and Biffa on contaminated bins.

The Head of Compliance Enforcement and Community Safety advised that many businesses owned space in front of their shops and were entitled to use it but, where shop were encroaching onto and obstructing the pavement, her service would take enforcement action. She reported that, where cars were parked in contravention of yellow lines or other traffic regulations, Parking Services would take enforcement action; however, if this was not the case, Greater Manchester Police (GMP) would need to decide whether an obstruction was being caused and, if so, take action. The Chair advised that Councillors needed to have clear information on which service was responsible for these kinds of issues, including the issue of parking in cycleways, so that they could report issues that were raised with them and empower residents to report these themselves. He also expressed concern that these issues were not being enforced to the extent that Members would like and asked the Head of Compliance Enforcement and Community Safety to raise this with Parking Services. The Head of Compliance Enforcement and Community Safety advised that she would also raise the issue of the enforcement of Blue Badge parking spaces with Parking Services. In response to a Member's question, she advised that there was

no legislation which prevented people from parking their cars on residential streets close to Manchester Airport while they went on holiday.

The Head of Compliance Enforcement and Community Safety informed the Committee that the Licensing Out of Hours Team had focused its resources on visiting premises which they had received the highest level of complaints about so some premises had not been visited for a number of years; however, she advised that a programme of inspections was now being put in place to ensure that every licensed premises would be inspected at some point. In response to a question about Martyn's Law, proposed legislation to improve event security following the Manchester Arena bombing, she advised that, although this was not law yet, new premises were encouraged to have these conditions included on their license. A Member recognised the hard work of officers in progressing Martyn's Law, which he hoped would become legislation within the next year or two, and reported that most clubs and premises in Manchester had undertaken some form of counter terrorism training.

In response to a Member's question, the Head of Compliance Enforcement and Community Safety advised that, when taking enforcement action, enforcement officers had to demonstrate that they had first taken reasonable steps to get the person to comply, even if Ward Councillors felt that they had already tried this before referring the issue to her service. She advised that in many cases educating the person or warning them that enforcement action could be taken against them was enough to persuade them to comply. In response to a Member's concern that residents were struggling to get issues addressed until they involved their Ward Councillor, she asked the Member to contact her about any specific examples so that she could look into this. She advised that the response to enforcement was the same across the city, although communities in some areas were more likely to report issues than in other areas. She informed Members that her service provided Ward Councillors with information on enforcement activity through Ward Co-ordination and that Committee Members could be provided with a breakdown of the activity taking place.

The Head of Compliance Enforcement and Community Safety reported that she had been speaking to the Communications Team about publicising enforcement activity which had been taken via social media. She advised that, where formal enforcement action was taken, the service asked for press releases to be issued, although whether this was reported in the press would depend on whether it was a busy news day. She advised that her service had been providing information and advice to bars on drink spiking and that there was a group being set up at a Greater Manchester level to look at this issue.

In response to a Member's questions about the Clean Air Zone, the Head of Compliance Enforcement and Community Safety advised that her service contributed to but did not lead on this work and that she did not anticipate that officers would struggle with this additional work but that she would come back to the Member with further information. She informed the Committee that she would look into the issue that a Member had raised about contaminated bins. In response to a Member's question, she outlined the work taking place in the Strangeways area as part of

Operation Magpie, advising that there was an ongoing sustained commitment from the Council and partner agencies to addressing these issues.

Decision

To request that Ward Councillors be provided with information on who is responsible for the enforcement of different kinds of parking issues, including parking on cycleways, and what regulations are being breached in these different situations.

CESC/21/54 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.

Decision

To note the report and agree the work programme.