

Manchester City Council Report for Information

Report to: Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee – 8 March 2022

Subject: Manchester City Council Peer Review and Action Plan

Report of: Chief Executive

Summary

Manchester City Council requested a Corporate Peer Review from the Local Government Association (LGA) which took place from 30 November to 3 December 2021. The overall feedback from the peer reviewers was very positive for both the Council and the city.

The peer review report highlighted seven areas for improvement that align with the Council's existing Corporate and Business Plan priorities. An action plan has been drafted to address these issues. A follow-up visit for the peer reviewers to check in on progress will be arranged for September 2022.

Recommendations

That Scrutiny note the contents of the peer review report and the action plan.

Wards Affected: All

Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city

The peer review report welcomed Manchester's progress in reducing carbon dioxide emissions through the zero carbon action plan for the Council and the leadership shown through the Zero Carbon Coordination Group. It highlighted that climate change was an important cross-cutting theme of the Corporate Plan. It mentioned the need to further embed these approaches across the city with clear accountabilities for delivery

Our Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the Our Manchester Strategy
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	The review report mentioned the impressive economic growth across the city and the strength of the economic recovery plans. It said the refresh of the Our Manchester Strategy is a good opportunity to refresh the ambition and approach towards developing a more inclusive economy, connecting more residents to the job opportunities and skills they need to play a full part.
A highly skilled city: world class and home-grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	

<p>A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities</p>	<p>The report said the Council has strong partnerships with other public services. It cited the impressive approach to strength-based working in health and social care that is driving lasting change. It emphasised the strong improvement in Children’s services in recent years.</p> <p>A recommendation of the report is to further accelerate progress on neighbourhoods with partners, including integrating with health and children’s services. The report mentioned progress on equalities and said this now needs to be embedded and owned at every level of the organisation.</p>
<p>A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work</p>	<p>A recommendation of the report is to use recent and further planned changes to develop a comprehensive approach to housing, addressing homelessness, affordable housing, and creating a more mixed housing market</p> <p>On climate change, the report cited great examples of success within the city Council, but these now need embedding across the city with clear accountabilities for delivery.</p>
<p>A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth</p>	<p>The peer review specifically looked at the digital aspects of transformation within the Future Shape of the Council programme. It noted this work is characteristically ambitious and that much progress has been made. It recommended that an internal digital strategy or plan is developed that describes how Council services will meet the changing expectations of residents and businesses, alongside the city-wide digital strategy that has been developed recently.</p>

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

None

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Manchester City Council (MCC) requested a Corporate Peer Review from the Local Government Association (LGA). Corporate Peer Reviews are an important part of the sector-led approach to improvement and help Council improve and learn. Peers from other Councils have the role of 'critical friends'. Reviews are not inspections and do not involve scored assessments, but the reports are published and are therefore high profile. Peer reviews are fully funded by the LGA.
- 1.2 Manchester's peer review was led by Cllr Georgia Gould, Leader of the London Borough of Camden, and Pat Ritchie, former Chief Executive of Newcastle City Council. The review team also included Mark Lloyd, the Chief Executive of the LGA.
- 1.3 The peers were on site in Manchester from 30 November to 3 December 2021. They had 58 meetings with over 300 officers at all levels, members and a wide range of partners. The peers triangulated information from these meetings and supporting information to prepare their final report.
- 1.4 The five standard themes of LGA Corporate Peer Reviews are:
 - Understanding local context and priority setting: Does the council understand its local context and has it established a clear set of priorities?
 - Leadership of Place: Does the council provide effective leadership of place through its elected members, officers and constructive relationships and partnerships with external stakeholders and its communities?
 - Organisational leadership and governance: Is there effective political and managerial leadership supported by good governance and decision-making arrangements that respond to key challenges and enable change and transformation to be implemented?
 - Financial planning and viability: Does the council have a financial plan in place to ensure long term viability and is there evidence that it is being implemented successfully?
 - Capacity to deliver: Is organisational capacity aligned with priorities and does the council influence, enable and leverage external capacity to focus on agreed outcomes and performance?
- 1.5 Manchester additionally requested a sixth theme, the Future Shape of the Council programme and our approach to digital.

2.0 Findings of the review

- 2.1 The LGA have published the review report and it is publicly available to read on the MCC website here:
https://www.manchester.gov.uk/directory_record/433602/local_government_association_corporate_peer_challenge/category/1174/council_and_democracy

- 2.2 The peer reviewers were extremely impressed with MCC and Manchester as a city. They concluded that Manchester is a hugely ambitious, innovative and determined 'city of firsts'. They called Manchester a 'first class council' that is a role model for others, with a proud and passionate workforce, members and partners. The strength of our political and officer leadership was highlighted, along with the smooth and mature transition of political leadership. Scrutiny was mentioned as a real strength, well resourced, rigorous, and improves decision making.
- 2.3 The peers said that the Our Manchester Strategy and behaviours were clearly embedded in how we work internally and with our partners. They said there is now an opportunity to create an even stronger narrative and action plan for a more inclusive economy in the city.
- 2.4 The peers welcomed the progress that Manchester had made in health and social care integration, and the depth of partnership, as a great foundation for the future. Neighbourhoods were cited as a real strength, as were the very significant improvements in children's services.
- 2.5 The peers noted that MCC has been a strong and effective financial steward through the years of austerity. They noted that the Council needs to plan early for the financial challenges coming in 2023/24 and be prepared to prioritise within the council's capital programme.
- 2.6 The report mentioned the Council's zero carbon action plan, where tangible outcomes are being directed and achieved, including to reduce carbon emissions from buildings and transport, and it said these approaches now need to be further embedded across the city.
- 2.7 Progress was also recognised on equalities, with further work needed on other protected characteristics as well as race for workforce equalities, and a consistent resident-facing, service-based emphasis on equalities in all parts of the organisation.
- 2.8 The peer review highlighted seven areas for improvement, which align with the Council's existing priorities in the Corporate and Business Plans.

3.0 Action Plan

- 3.1 An action plan has been developed to address the seven areas for improvement:

	Peer Review report wording	Lead/s	Actions
1	Inclusive Economy. Use the refreshing of 'Our Manchester' to bring to life a stronger narrative for an 'Inclusive Economy' and the 'Levelling Up' of the city as a whole. Ensuring there is a clear set of	Joanne Roney Becca Heron	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a narrative and action plan for the Economy & Inclusive Economy by the end of March 2022, with a particular focus on inclusion and equalities

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	action plans underpinning this which demonstrate where the council wants to prioritise and how this will be achieved.	James Binks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This will align with the Our Manchester Strategy, Our Healthier Manchester Locality Plan, Building Back Fairer (Marmot action plan), and reviews of other strategies such as work and skills, poverty, housing, digital and climate change
2	Our Year. As part of the above, celebrate the real progress on children's services and make the most of '2022: Our Year' to galvanise the council and the city, ensuring every part of the council demonstrates its commitment to Manchester's children.	Paul Marshall All of SMT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver an incredible year of activity and events for children and young people through Our Year 2022, with contributions from all Council directorates and partners Build the voice of children and young people more strongly into all decisions and programmes Build on successful Unicef accreditation as a child friendly city, developing a strong legacy plan to ensure this work is embedded and sustained beyond 2022
3	Housing. Use the recent and further planned changes to develop a comprehensive approach to housing, addressing homelessness, affordable housing, and creating a more mixed housing market.	Becca Heron Fiona Worrall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a new Housing Strategy that covers housing growth, role of developers, social and affordable housing, social determinants of health, and opportunities of further integration from bringing Northwards in house Ensure this delivers sufficient affordable and social housing of the right quality, aligned to our commitments to tackle climate change, poverty and other key strategic objectives Homelessness transformation programme in the context of significant rising demand, poor

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			<p>outcomes and financial pressures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of Manchester's Local Plan
4	<p>Neighbourhoods. Strengthen and deepen the impressive approach around neighbourhoods with the Council's partners, embedding the neighbourhood and place work in the corporate core, and including a clear framework for evaluation and impact. This should include:</p>	<p>Fiona Worrall</p> <p>Katy Calvin-Thomas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme of work led by SMT to develop Manchester's next phase of neighbourhood working, bringing together all Council directorates and key partners such as MLCO, Housing Providers and GMP • Underpinned by a clear evaluation framework to demonstrate impact in neighbourhoods, aligned to the Future Shape work on data and digital
4.1	<p>Aligning aspects of the capital programme to the neighbourhood approach, particularly in relation to environmental and highway spending. Better utilisation of physical assets in neighbourhoods across the city, recognising the impact that small scale investment can make on local communities.</p>	<p>Fiona Worrall</p> <p>Carol Culley</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As part of our future Budget proposals and Future Shape of the Council, review Manchester's capital programme more closely align with the neighbourhoods approach, neighbourhood priorities, and use of assets across the city
4.2	<p>Accelerate and give greater focus to the integration of children's services and health delivered through the neighbourhood model.</p>	<p>Bernie Enright</p> <p>Katy Calvin-Thomas</p> <p>Paul Marshall</p> <p>Fiona Worrall</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manchester Place-Based Lead and Manchester Partnership Board to drive next phase of health and social care integration, including development of our neighbourhood approach and greater integration with children's services • Manchester Partnership Board drive delivery of 8 priorities and programme of actions for the health and care recovery in the next 12-24 months • Programme of work to develop Manchester's next phase of neighbourhood

	Peer Review report wording	Lead/s	Actions
			<p>working, bringing together all Council directorates and key partners such as MLCO, Housing Providers and GMP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To include actions to more closely align aspects of Children’s services in localities and neighbourhoods, such as the Think Family approach, with MLCO, other health partners, and other partners in the city • Underpinned by a clear evaluation framework to demonstrate impact in neighbourhoods
4.3	Building on the strong Council buy into Marmot principles, ensure that employment and skills and prevention are a core part of the neighbourhood offers.	<p>David Regan</p> <p>Becca Heron</p> <p>Fiona Worrall</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the action plan to take forward Building Back Fairer (Marmot) in Manchester on all seven themes of the wider determinants of health, by end March 2022. • Align with the new Work and Skills Strategy, Inclusive Economy narrative, Locality Plan, Poverty Strategy, work to review our neighbourhood approach
4.4	The neighbourhoods work is very strong especially at engaging existing community groups. There could be more focus on community development and bringing in those who struggle to engage with council services or find a voice. Explore how to make sure the voices of all communities are setting neighbourhood and Manchester wide priorities, for example, by utilising the strength of the arts and culture bedrock in MCC as a means of engaging with	<p>Fiona Worrall</p> <p>James Binks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme of work to develop Manchester’s next phase of neighbourhood working, bringing together all Council directorates and key partners – to include VCSE sector relationships • Review our approach to Our Manchester funding for the VCSE sector ahead of the 2023/24 year • Review our approach to providing infrastructure support to the VCSE sector by end March 2022 • Analyse Census 2021 alongside local intelligence

	Peer Review report wording	Lead/s	Actions
	groups which are harder to reach.		<p>and data to better understand the diversity of our population and where additional targeted engagement is needed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community and resident engagement activities aligned to all of the priorities and strategies mentioned in this plan • Develop the Cohesion Strategy for the city
5	<p>Equalities. Keep the focus on equality, diversity and inclusion within the Council. Ensure this moves from a welcomed and new strategy to become embedded and owned at every level of the organisation, with clear and transparent accountability and monitoring of impact. Build on emerging plans around improving diversity in positions of power, particularly black leadership, more generally in the city.</p>	<p>Fiona Ledden</p> <p>All of SMT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an overarching Equalities Strategy that embeds equalities more strongly into all areas of the Council, led by the new corporate equalities group (CEDILG) • Improve how we use Equalities Impact Assessments to improve policy proposals and mitigate impacts, expanding to include poverty as well as protected characteristics, as a stronger element of our future budget planning • Deliver the ambitious actions set out in the Workforce Equalities Strategy for the Council
6	<p>Capacity. Ensure there is sufficient capacity, in the strategic capacity of MCC to deliver on Our Manchester, Future Shape and the wider transformation and aspirations in terms of Neighbourhoods. Specifically consider the following as part of this:</p>	<p>Joanne Roney</p> <p>Carol Culley</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the strategic capacity of the Council through proposals to Personnel Committee in February 2022, in the context of our future budget proposals • Manchester Place-Based Leader role for Health and Social Care and delivery of Manchester Partnership Board priorities • Review the Future Shape of the Council programme in terms of scope and capacity to deliver

	Peer Review report wording	Lead/s	Actions
			<p>measurable improvements given the wider challenges we face.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The next phase of our work on digital across the Council as a particular focus of Future Shape
6.1	Is it time to consider the alignment of the cabinet portfolio holders and two Deputy Leaders with the OM refresh to guarantee strong political leadership and ownership?	Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Leader will consider the future Executive team portfolios after the local elections in May 2022
6.2	Is the Council's senior team appropriately shaped and with capacity in the right places to tackle and deliver on the big drivers of change both internally and externally too?	Joanne Roney	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See action 6
6.3	Does the Chief Executive and senior team have direct access to the policy and performance support needed to lead the council through change and maintain their significant outward leadership of the city, the region and to shape national policy?	Joanne Roney	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See action 6
6.4	Is there a sufficiently clear plan and long-term capacity to deliver on transformation at senior officer level?	Joanne Roney Carol Culley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See action 6 Review the Future Shape of the Council programme in terms of scope and capacity to deliver measurable improvements given the wider challenges we face, in the context of our future budget proposals The next phase of our work on digital across the Council as a particular focus of Future Shape
7	Finance. Maintain the sound financial platform underpinned by robust risk management and ensure you are taking the difficult decisions which underpin the MTFP and reflect the refreshing of priorities and	Carol Culley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop the budget strategy for 2022/23 Develop clear budget proposals for the more challenging financial years of 2023/24 and 2024/25, and review the capital

	Peer Review report wording	Lead/s	Actions
	capacity issues referenced in previous recommendations. Plan early for the financial challenges coming in 2023/24 and be prepared to prioritise within the Council's capital programme		programme, through a Council-wide programme of work in Spring and Summer 2022

4.0 Next Steps

- 4.1 Delivery of the actions set out above will be tracked by Strategic Management Team and Executive Members.
- 4.2 A follow-up visit for the peer review team to check in on progress will be arranged in September 2022.