

Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 8 March 2022

Present:

Councillor Russell (Chair) – in the Chair

Councillors Ahmed Ali, Andrews, Hitchen, Lanchbury, B Priest, Robinson, Simcock and Wheeler

Also present:

Councillor Craig, Leader

Councillor Akbar, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods

Councillor White, Executive Member for Housing and Employment

Apologies: Councillor Davies, Rowles and Wright

RGSS/22/14 Minutes

Decision

The Committee approve the minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2022 as a correct record.

RGSS/22/15 Housing Services Advisory Committee March Update

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) and Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer that provided an update to the Committee on the proposed new governance arrangements in respect of the Council Housing Stock.

Key points and themes of the report included:-

- The new advisory committee was intended to provide oversight of the housing management and maintenance services (formerly Northwards ALMO);
- The advisory committee would make a significant contribution to empowering tenants and ensuring that North Manchester residents helped shape and hold to account the Council's Housing Service; and
- Set out the responses to the RAGOS recommendations of December 2021.

Some of the key points that arose from the Committees discussions were:-

- Would meetings of the Northwards Housing Service Advisory Committee be held in public;
- Would papers for such meetings be made available to all Councillors with Northwards Housing properties in their wards;
- What were the quorum arrangements for these meetings;
- Recognising the number of response from tenants, this engagement and interest needed to be built upon and harnessed; and

- Consideration needed to be given to establishing Neighbourhood Panels to capture local tenant voices that could then feed into the Northwards Housing Service Advisory Committee.

The Director of Housing Operations advised Members that meetings of the Northwards Housing Service Advisory Committee would be held in public, in North Manchester at the request of the tenants. He confirmed that the quorum would be five, comprised of resident and elected members. He confirmed that the papers for these meetings would be shared with all elected Members with Northwards Housing properties in their wards. He advised that the recruitment for the co-opted Member was currently ongoing. In response to a specific question, he confirmed that if the number of Council managed properties increased these proposed governance arrangements would be reviewed.

The Executive Member advised that he did not wish to duplicate work and structures that already existed across neighbourhoods and he did not wish to appear to be prescriptive in how the Advisory Committee operated. He commented that it would be appropriate to ask that the Advisory Committee consider how the wider resident voice was best captured and fed into the Committee, noting the need to capture the diversity of views of all tenants. He advised that information on how this had been progressed would be reported in any future update report to the Committee.

Decision

The Committee notes the report.

RGSS/22/16 Manchester City Council Peer Review and Action Plan

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive that described that Manchester City Council had requested a Corporate Peer Review from the Local Government Association (LGA) which had taken place from 30 November to 3 December 2021.

Key points and themes of the report included:-

- 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 had been drafted to address these issues; and
- A follow-up visit for the peer reviewers to check in on progress will be arranged for September 2022.

Some of the key points that arose from the Committees discussions were:-

- Welcoming the many positive findings of the review;
- Noting that the strength of scrutiny in Manchester was recognised and the Committee paid tribute to all of the officers who supported this important function;
- The need to measure progress and outcomes against the action plan;

- The need to ensure that all staff, regardless of grade were aware of the ambitions of the action plan and their role in delivering this, adding that this needed to be explicit within the actions;
- Welcoming the commitment to address poverty and inequalities; and
- Paying tribute to all staff working across the Neighbourhood Teams and recognising the important work they deliver on behalf of the residents of the city.

The Director of Policy, Performance and Reform advised that the action plan would be shared more widely with partners, including the Our Manchester Investment Board and all managers within the Council would discuss the plan and the key themes with staff and would inform the ongoing 1 to 1's with staff. This would further inform the approach to wider staff development initiatives.

The Leader welcomed the positive comments from the Members and paid tribute to the officers who had facilitated the peer review. She commented that the review had been undertaken in the spirit of a critical friend and they had identified many strengths and positive examples of progress and leadership by the Council to improve outcomes for residents, especially in the context of the budget restraints. She stated that the Council had been identified as being able to adapt and respond positively to challenges. She commented that one of the findings was that the Council needed to talk more positively and promote the many positive initiatives and improvements we had delivered, noting this was very unusual for a peer review to recommend.

The Leader stated that the strength, arrangements and approach to scrutiny in Manchester had been recognised as very positive, noting that scrutiny presented a robust challenge to the Executive.

The Leader commented that it was understood that the work to address inequalities and adverse health outcomes was a strand of work that cut across all aspects of the work of the Council, adding that this was informed and strengthened by the work undertaken with Professor Michael Marmot. She advised that progress against this work to reduce inequities and improve outcomes for residents was captured in the State of the City report and she recommended that each of the scrutiny committees would continue to monitor progress of the action plan throughout the year, adding that consideration would be given to include targets and reports outcomes.

The Leader stated that consideration would continue to be given as to how the Capital Programme Budget aligned to neighbourhood priorities.

Decision

The Committee notes the report.

RGSS/22/17 Progress Made With Council Motions Over Last 24 Months

The Committee considered the report of the City Solicitor that provided an update on the progress made in respect of motions that have been passed before Manchester City Council over the last 2 years.

Some of the key points that arose from the Committees discussions were:-

- Recommending that an annual report on the Progress Made With Council Motions be submitted to the Committee for consideration;
- The annual report should be circulated to all Members of the Council; and
- Noting that motions passed at Council had influenced Government policy and had articulated the concerns and issues experienced by Manchester residents.

The Leader commented that consideration would be given as how to best to capture all of the activities that arose following the passing of a Council motion, mindful of the difference between officer activity and political activity.

The City Solicitor advised that further information on the recent Spiking motion would be circulated following the meeting.

Decision

The Committee notes the report and recommends that an annual update report is submitted for consideration at an appropriate time.

RGSS/22/18 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 included the Committee's work programme, which the Committee was asked to amend as appropriate and agree.

The Chair noted that the new Chair and Committee would hold a work programming session at the meeting in May, the first meeting of the new municipal year to consider the Work Programme. Noting the comments and requests for future reports when the Committee considered the previous agenda items.

Decision

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

RGSS/22/19 Vote of thanks

The Committee recognised that this would be the last meeting that Councillor Russell would attend in her capacity as Chair. Members wished to place on record their appreciation for her dedication and commitment to the work of the Committee.