

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee – 10 January 2023

Subject: Bonfire Night Events

Report of: Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods)

Summary

This report was requested by the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee and provides an overview of the approach to planning and delivery of a safe Bonfire/fireworks season. As requested by the Committee the report includes details of anti-social behaviour during this period and an assessment of the impact of the Council's decision not to reinstate Bonfire Night events during 2022.

Recommendations

The Committee is invited to consider and comment on the information contained in this report.

Wards Affected: All

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

None

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - the impact of the issues addressed in this report in meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty and broader equality commitments
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The Community Safety Partnership contributes towards the elimination of unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act.
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Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS/Contribution to the Strategy
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	
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	This report will highlight how the work to achieve community safety contributes towards this outcome by ensuring neighbourhoods are safe and therefore a destination of choice for people to live, visit and work.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	

Full details are in the body of the report, along with any implications for:

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Risk Management
- Legal Considerations

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Background documents (available for public inspection): Not applicable

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report relates to the approach to delivering a safe and enjoyable programme of activities in the run up to and during bonfire night, following the decision not to reinstate bonfires/fireworks displays in council parks, post covid, which had seen no events held in the previous two years, pending a review of wider impacts.
- 1.2 The report provides details of proactive activity undertaken by partners to reduce the impact of criminal and antisocial behaviour and also highlights activities that have been occurring in place of the organised Bonfire Night events in Manchester.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 In October 2022 Manchester City Council announced that Council organised bonfires would not be taking place that year. This followed a two-year lay-off during the Covid-19 pandemic with Bonfire Night events last being held in 2019.
- 2.2 The commitment to becoming a net zero carbon city by 2038, escalating costs of delivering large bonfire events and the increasing safety and organisational measures needed were all considerations in the decision to pause the reinstatement of bonfire events in 2022, pending a review of the future of Bonfire Night events.

3.0 The Greater Manchester Bonfire Campaign 2022

- 3.1 This section details the annual approach taken in Manchester and across Greater Manchester to preventing and tackling bonfire and firework related injuries, antisocial behaviour, and criminal damage in the run up to and during Halloween and Bonfire Night. It also highlights some of the proactive interventions carried out by partners in Manchester.
- 3.2 The Greater Manchester Bonfire Campaign (previously known as Operation Treacle) is a partnership across Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS), Greater Manchester Police (GMP), Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), local councils, and Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM).
- 3.3 This campaign has been effective in helping to tackle key issues such as antisocial behaviour, deliberate fires, and firework safety. In 2021, agencies developed the Bang Out of Order campaign to reduce antisocial behaviour, specifically deliberate fires, over the period. The headline outcomes from the 2021 campaign were mostly positive, with many measures demonstrating reductions compared with the previous year's campaign. Both deliberate primary and secondary fires were reduced overall in the 2021 campaign, however there were increases in attacks on Firefighters and hoax calls attended by GMFRS.

- 3.4 The 2022 campaign, therefore, continued to focus on reducing antisocial behaviour, specifically attacks on emergency services, hoax calls, and deliberate primary and secondary fires. A targeted and evidence-led campaign raised awareness of the consequences of antisocial behaviour, how it impacts on communities and emergency services, and how to report. The campaign also aimed to reduce the number of fireworks and bonfire injuries by promoting fire safety advice and encouraging residents to attend organised events where possible.
- 3.5 Target audiences included young people who get involved in antisocial behaviour and deliberate fire setting, diverting them to another activity where possible while making them aware of the consequences of their behaviour. Parents were encouraged to have conversations with their children about their behaviour during the bonfire period. Residents affected by antisocial behaviour and deliberate fires were informed how to report and who to report to.
- 3.6 The Bonfire Campaign was delivered across all ten Greater Manchester Local Authorities for 2022 and saw key agencies once again working closely together to reduce the negative impact of bonfires and fireworks on communities. The campaign also supported existing local initiatives occurring during the Halloween and Bonfire period to address the issue of antisocial behaviour.
- 3.7 The campaign built on the existing partnership operations that had been undertaken in recent years by aiming to achieve the following:
- Branded recognition
 - An agreed Greater Manchester communications strategy
 - Minimum standards to ensure a consistent approach
 - A best practice toolkit for partners
 - Analysis and evaluation of partnership data to inform future planning
- 3.8 At a local level, the campaign was delivered in three phases covering the period 1 September to 30 November. Phase 1 covered prevention and risk reduction where agencies such as GMFRS, the Council's Trading Standards, and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) worked collaboratively to minimise the illegal and irresponsible sale of fireworks during September, October, and November. Phase 2 expanded on the prevention and risk reduction work to cover enforcement and reassurance activity where GMFRS, GMP and the Council's Community Safety/Antisocial Behaviour Team dealt with the consequences of fire related antisocial behaviour and provided reassurance to communities during the days between Halloween and Bonfire Night. Phase 3 covered prevention, risk reduction and evaluation work where agencies worked to safely store and destroy illegal fireworks.
- 3.9 A communication strategy, led by GMFRS, ran through all three phases allowing the successes during each phase to be publicised. The key messages of the campaign were promoted locally at every opportunity by all agencies. These messages included promoting a safe and enjoyable

Halloween and Bonfire Night, reiterating that antisocial behaviour, deliberate fire setting, attacks on emergency services, criminal damage, and misuse of fireworks have serious consequences and will not be tolerated. Information for parents/carers included knowing where their children are and how to contact them, and ensuring costumes met safety standards and were kept away from naked flames. Details of how to report bonfires on public land and contact the Council for removal along with how to contact GMFRS regarding the safe disposal of fireworks were also provided.

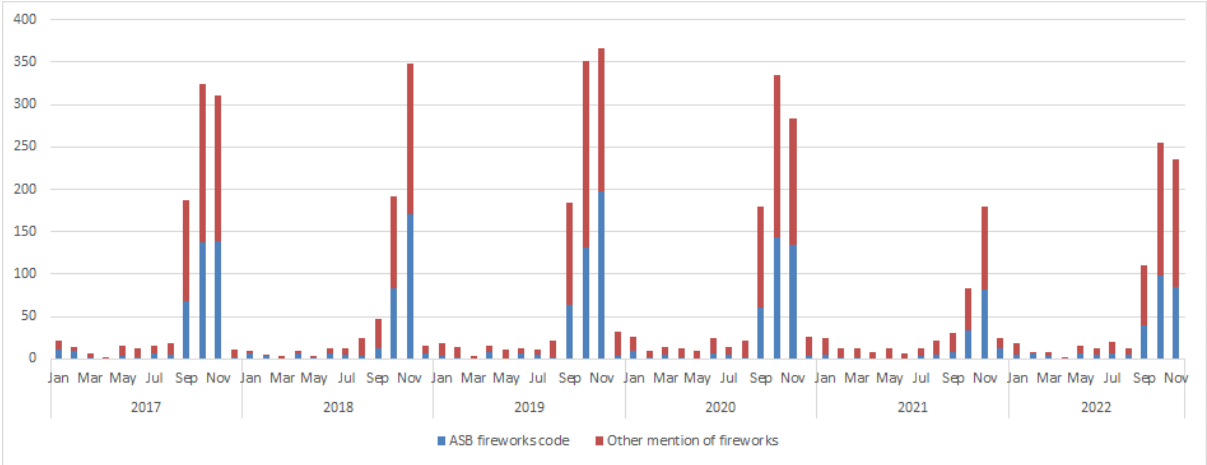
- 3.10 Locally, partners were encouraged to target activities in wards that were highlighted as having the highest seasonal incidents over the previous three years. The Council's Antisocial Behaviour Team (ASBAT) coordinated a multi-agency group to develop and implement a partnership plan that focused on the hotspot wards in Manchester. Members of the group included GMP, GMFRS, housing providers, and officers from relevant Council teams including Community Safety, Housing Services, Parks, Trading Standards, Compliance, and Licensing and Out of Hours. The plan was formulated based on intelligence and the key phases outlined in the 2022 Bonfire Campaign Terms of Reference: Prevention and Risk Reduction, Enforcement and Reassurance followed by evaluation. Alongside the targeted work in the hotspot wards, similar work to deliver the Bonfire Campaign locally was also delivered in our other wards across Manchester by GMP/MCC/Housing Providers.
- 3.11 Trading Standards sent out advisory letters to all registered sellers of fireworks in Manchester. The letter provided advice on how to avoid selling to those who were underage and about the safety requirements for fireworks. Trading Standards did not receive any reports of underage sales this year. Trading Standards and GMFRS undertook inspections of premises licensed to sell fireworks and visited eight premises. Four were inspected with two found not to be selling, and two had closed. The only issue was one that Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue (GMFRS) found at a premises in Longsight. They issued a prohibition notice to stop anyone residing upstairs for the duration of the fireworks period as the occupiers had already failed to adhere to a previous notice issued regarding the fire alarms.
- 3.12 Targeted community engagements took place prior to Halloween and Bonfire Night on key streets that were identified through GMFRS data, previous reports received by the Council, and anecdotal information from partners. Residents were informed of the key campaign messages, how to report crime and antisocial behaviour concerns, how to access victim services, and given the opportunity to request a free Home Fire Safety Assessment from GMFRS. Educational initiatives were delivered to schools and youth provisions to help keep young people safe and explain the consequences of engaging in antisocial behaviour. The Council, GMP and Housing Providers worked together throughout the campaign period to regularly review reports of firework/bonfire related antisocial behaviour which resulted in advice and support being provided to residents and details of incidents being shared with housing providers to follow up and action. GMP also regularly patrolled hotspot areas and worked with partners to provide reassurance to residents and businesses.

- 3.13 The Council delivered a bonfire removals service whereby key partner agencies could report bonfire builds into the Council and in turn the Council would arrange for removal of the bonfire within 24 hours. In most cases this took place on the same day. The Council was only able to remove bonfire builds from Council owned/managed land and/or open and accessible land under no clear ownership or management. The Council could not remove from private land, particularly where Community Associations, etc. organised a bonfire. The Council received 15 reports for removal of bonfires and in the most cases were able to remove these.
- 3.14 An initial debrief was held with members of the multi-agency group who were positive about the intelligence led and coordinated partnership work. The GMFRS analysis of the 2022 Bonfire Campaign is pending and when this information is available officers will utilise the data and recommendations to inform, along with any learning and feedback from partners and the community, activity for 2023.

4.0 Bonfire and Fireworks Incidents

- 4.1 Incidents involving fireworks in Manchester saw an increase during September, October, and November 2022 compared with the same months in 2021. Comparisons with data collected before 2019 need to be treated with some caution, due to the change in GMP computer systems that year, but incident numbers for 2022 were still below the average number of incidents for the same months between 2017 and 2020 as shown in the graph below:

Fireworks incidents recorded by GMP, City of Manchester, January 2017 to November 2022



- 4.2 Only 107 out of 601 incidents between September and November 2022 happened on the weekend of 5 and 6 November. As nuisance linked to fireworks spans several weeks, organised displays are unlikely to have a major impact on this issue.
- 4.3 During October and November 2022, the worst affected wards for fireworks incidents were Miles Platting & Newton Heath, Ardwick, Crumpsall, Moss Side and Cheetham. While some calls were about the noise nuisance associated

with fireworks, a significant number mentioned fireworks being thrown or fired at people, houses, and vehicles. At least ten incidents involved fireworks being posted through letterboxes.

- 4.4 ASBAT data identified 16 Halloween/fire/fireworks reports between 21 October 2022 and 7 November 2022. This is a new case category code introduced in 2022 which means that comparisons have not been able to be drawn with the number of reports with previous years. These reports were received directly from residents or following officers reviewing reports made to GMP. Only one report related to an incident on 5 November. The 15 other reports were received between 21 October 2022 to 2 November 2022 suggesting the majority of firework nuisance and antisocial behaviour occurs prior to Bonfire Night. Separate from actions available to GMP, the Council, and Housing Providers undertook to deliver civil or tenancy warnings if there was evidence of nuisance and antisocial behaviour.

5.0 Future of Bonfire Night Events

- 5.1 As noted above the commitment to becoming a net zero carbon city by 2038 is a key consideration in the review of the future position of bonfire activities in Council parks. This along with an understanding of impacts on other services including GMFRS, GMP, community safety services and other partners, costs of delivering large bonfire events and the increasing safety and organisational measures needed will all be considered as part of the wider review on the future of bonfire events.
- 5.2 As an interim position, a programme of local winter activity and engagement that meets the needs of young people and their families has been developed. The winter period, starting with the half-term school holiday in late October 2022 and concluding with the half-term holiday in February 2023, provides an opportunity to engage with young people and their families in fun and free activity that has a strong thread of community safety and reflects the challenges that residents are facing in the cost-of-living crisis. A locality model has been used to engage with stakeholders to develop the principles of an alternative offer into a programme of activity.
- 5.3 By mid-December 2022, a programme of over 15 events and activities had taken place with more than 6,000 participants. The programme has encompassed a range of activities with a focus on initiatives that provide free or low-cost food, educational resources such as books, opportunities to participate in sports and physical activity, and celebrate culturally appropriate dates in the calendar.
- 5.4 The programme is ongoing with further opportunity for local stakeholders to engage and identify local priorities. It is expected that this will result in a significant increase in participation numbers.
- 5.5 The feedback through the locality approach has focused on smaller scale and local events that deliver to local priorities. The future approach will emerge as the final review of the approach for 2022 can be concluded, early indications

are that the locality approach has been well received and would see support for targeted community events to continue as an alternative model. Park's will continue to provide a vibrant programme of events and activities through this period and there will be a focus on the development of partnerships and commissioned activity that deliver to an increasingly diverse programme.

- 5.6 The full analysis of data collected across partner agencies in 2022 is anticipated in early 2023. The data and the detail of the challenges faced during this period and the positive impacts of the alternative approach will form the basis of consultation that will inform the approach to the programme in the coming years.

6.0 Recommendations

- 6.1 The Committee is invited to consider and comment on the information contained in this report.