

Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee – End of Year Summary 2022/23

Over the previous 12 months, the Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee has continued to examine a wide range of issues within its remit to ensure that the Council uses its resources effectively to deliver services for Manchester residents. The Committee has worked positively with the Executive Leader and the Executive Members in scrutinising their proposals throughout the year.

In June 2022, the Committee began the municipal year by considering an annual performance update of the Council's Revenues and Benefits service and the Committee commended officers within the team for their hard work in supporting those most vulnerable in the city. The Committee also considered a report on the Council's capital outturn position for 2021/22, including total expenditure and funding. The report confirmed that funding sources had been managed to best utilise resources available to fund the capital programme and that the capital programme for the 2022/23 financial year had been revised after taking into account the final outturn position.

July saw the Committee examining the Council's approach to ethical procurement and forthcoming changes in Government procurement rules and their potential impacts for the Council. The Committee also considered a report on how major contracts were managed and, although receptive to the information received, the Committee recommended the creation of a Major Contracts Oversight Board, which was to be made up of officers and chaired by the Executive Member for Finance. The proposed purpose of this Board was to evaluate all major contracts with the potential to co-opt other Executive Members to chair the board where a contract fell within their portfolio. This recommendation was accepted by the Executive Member and a Board was established. The Committee also recommended that Council should establish which other councils were working on projects to bring services back 'in-house' and to learn from their experiences.

July also saw an update report submitted on the performance of the Council's Human Resources, Organisational Development and Transformation (HRODT) department. The HRODT department was continuing to focus on the needs of the workforce to ensure that staff were in the best possible position to be able to deliver excellent services to residents with the support they needed. The Committee specifically queried how the service engaged with care leavers and transgender employees and requested that a future report included feedback from staff about their experiences of working at the Council.

Following the summer recess, the Committee focused on property and assets and considered the annual Section 106 report, the Annual Property Report, and a report on the ownership of assets. The Committee welcomed the information received and requested that a further update on Section 106 monies be provided in the next municipal year, with reference to the extent to which Section 278 monies can be

utilised. The Committee also received a demonstration of the Council's Property Asset Database (CPAD) and recommended that efforts to have members of the Council trained on the CPAD system be increased and that training on the system be included as part of the wider induction programme for members.

In October, the Committee received updates on two of the Council's major projects – Our Town Hall and Factory International. The Committee sought assurances that there would be no requirement for future capital expenditure increases for the Factory International project, particularly given the financial instability experienced in the last 12 months. There was also particular interest in the various funding streams secured for Factory International and the Committee welcomed assurances that, although there was no indication of additional government funding, the Council would consistently endeavour to secure funding for all its cultural programmes. The Committee also commended the social value achievements of the Our Town Hall project and the partial reopening of Albert Square but again sought to ascertain how confident officers were that no further budget increases would be required for the project. It was requested that a report on maintenance schedules for public realms be brought to a future meeting and that a further update on the Our Town Hall project be provided in 12 months.

October also saw the Committee consider reports on the ICT and Digital Strategy and the Resident and Business Digital Experience Programme (RBDxP). The ICT and Digital Strategy would enable delivery of the next phase of the Future Shape of the Council programme and deliver an improved service to residents and businesses. RBDxP also formed part of the Future Shape transformation programme and would create a single integrated platform to allow the Council's front-facing systems to interact to the benefit of residents and businesses. The Committee was particularly interested to note how the Strategy would help to meet the Council's climate change targets and were informed that improvements as a result of the Strategy would save 63 tonnes of CO² per year.

In November, the Committee welcomed a number of guests from the Council's Leadership Pathways Programme, Diverse Panels, Women's Equality Network, Pregnancy & Parenting Group, Neurodiverse Employees Group and the Race Equality Network Assurance Working Party and considered the Workforce Equality Strategy. Guests shared their experiences and achievements, which the Committee commended. The Committee expressed some concern over inconsistencies in managers' approaches to and understanding of equalities and requested that a future update report includes reference to the work and progress made by senior and middle managers to implement the Strategy.

The Committee also considered the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, which outlined the progress the Council had made in delivery, the impact of the pandemic on the workforce and to the delivery of the strategy, how the strategy would be reviewed and provided an insight into the Council's sickness absence rates.

December's meeting saw the Committee consider a report on the new Housing Advisory Board, which provided oversight of Manchester City Council Housing Services, formerly Northwards ALMO, and ensured that North Manchester residents helped to shape and held the Council's Housing Service to account. The Committee welcomed to the meeting a local elected member and independent co-opted members who sat on the Board. The Committee also considered the impact of recent market changes on the Capital Programme.

At the start of 2023, the Committee welcomed the Executive Member for Finance and Resources and the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer to present the Council's budget position for 2023/24. Recognising the priorities and projects of each directorate, the Committee noted that a balanced budget was forecasted for 2023/24 and 2024/25. Whilst welcoming the changes arising from the Local Government Finance Settlement, which deferred difficult financial decisions to 2025/26, the Committee noted the lack of certainty or financial security for councils over the longer term. The Committee endorsed the recommendation that the Executive approves the budget proposals for inclusion to Full Council for final consideration.

The Committee finished the year by receiving a further update on the Revenues and Benefits service and reports on the progress of the Parks Development Programme; the Community Asset Transfer Policy refresh; progress on Council Motions over the last 12 months; and an update on the work of the Major Contracts Oversight Board, which the Committee recommended be established earlier in the municipal year.

Two key decisions were called in and referred to the Committee during the municipal year. In July, the Committee considered a decision of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer to approve capital expenditure of £1,170,000 to fit out levels 5 and 6 of Manchester Town Hall. In considering the rationale behind the decision, the Committee was satisfied that external advisors had been consulted on value-for-money and a report outlining the financial benefits of the decision had been considered by the Strategic Board and, consequently, the Committee agreed not to refer the original decision back to the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer for reconsideration.

A second call-in was received in September, relating to a decision by the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer to approve capital expenditure of £11.905 million to deliver 2 3G Cork Infill Football Turf Pitches, the demolition of an existing changing facility, Leisure Centre Extension and Car Parking at Hough End Leisure Centre and Playing Fields site. Satisfied that there was a viable business plan with a financial return; that the scheme had been designed with the needs of two local schools in mind; and that both the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer and the Strategic Director Neighbourhoods were confident that the correct decision-making processes had been followed, the Committee agreed to uphold the original decision.

To conclude, the Committee has examined a wide range of topics within its remit in the 2022/23 municipal year and will continue to scrutinise areas of interest and

importance for Members and residents and to follow up on the implementations of scrutiny recommendations. The Committee will continue to challenge and work effectively with the Executive while remaining a critical friend to provide recommendations that result in positive outcomes for Manchester residents.

The Council will hold eleven meetings of the Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee in the 2023/24 municipal year and a draft work programme will be devised and considered in May.