

Economy and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday, 18 July 2023

Present:

Councillor Johns – in the Chair

Councillors Abdullatif, Benham, Hussain, Iqbal, Northwood, Richards, I Robinson, Shilton Godwin and Taylor

Also present:

Councillor White, Executive Member for Housing and Development

Councillor Lynch, Deputy Executive Member for Housing and Development

Jason Hingley, This City

ERSC/23/29 Minutes

Decision

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2023 be approved as a correct record.

ERSC/23/30 Manchester Housing Strategy (2022-2032) - Annual Monitoring Report

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director (Growth and Development) which provided an update on the progress made towards the Strategy's objectives during 2022-23.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Increasing affordable housing supply and building more new homes for all residents;
- Work to end homelessness and ensure housing was affordable and accessible to all;
- Addressing inequalities and creating neighbourhoods where people wanted to live; and
- Addressing the sustainability and zero carbon challenges in new and existing housing;

Key points and queries that arose from the Committee's discussions included:

- To welcome the ambition for the city and the progress being made, while recognising that there was significant work still to do and the challenges the Council was facing;
- Domestic violence and the allocation of housing priority bands;
- Barriers preventing local authorities from delivering more social and affordable housing;
- The age of many buildings in Manchester and the challenges with retrofitting;
- The definition of affordable housing;

- The number of people on the waiting list for different types of properties; and
- Consideration of access to amenities such as GPs and shops when planning new housing developments.

The Executive Member for Housing and Development reported that domestic abuse victims were classified as band one and he offered to provide further information on the allocations policy and how this was working. He highlighted the progress in reducing the use of temporary accommodation. In response to Members' comments, he stated that it was very important to develop on the city's brownfield sites to deliver social and affordable housing, although there were challenges with contamination and viability. He outlined the progress being made with retrofitting housing, while stating that more needed to be done and that some of this work was conditional on Government funding. In response to a Member's question, he highlighted that the Council worked with Arawak Walton, the largest independent black and minority ethnic (BME) Housing Association in the North West, which had a long history of working in central Manchester.

The Executive Member for Housing and Development reported that, for planning purposes, the Council had to use the Government definition of affordable housing but that the Council had introduced the Manchester Living Rent, which they believed was truly affordable, and which many of the Council's partners were signing up to. In response to a Member's question about delays in construction of new developments, he advised that work had to start within three years of planning permission being granted. He highlighted some of the challenges with this and stated that, in relation to partners within the Manchester Housing Provider Partnership (MHPP), the Council could have a positive dialogue on overcoming delays, but that this could be more challenging in the case of private developers. In response to a Member's question, he outlined some of the challenges that the Council's partners were facing with building lower carbon buildings, including funding and the legal framework, while stating that MHPP partners had a strong commitment to delivering this and highlighting the mechanisms the Council had to enforce this. The Strategic Director (Growth and Development) highlighted how, in relation to the private sector, the Council had to balance the need for more homes, the need for more affordable homes and the need for carbon net zero homes.

A Member who was also the Chair of the Environment, Climate Change and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Committee (ECCNSC), invited Committee Members to attend the 7 September meeting of her committee for an item on Housing Retrofit. She clarified that targets related to zero carbon and not net zero carbon. In response to a Member's request for information on how much of the carbon reduction budget was being spent on housing, the Chair advised that it was likely that this would be considered by ECCNSC and that he would speak to the Chair of that Committee about it.

In response to a Member's question, the Strategic Director (Growth and Development) reported that Homes England had experienced uncertainty in recent years about the capital funding they had available to deploy. She highlighted the £150m of brownfield funding over three years to accelerate housing delivery as part of the Greater Manchester Trailblazer Devolution Deal, stating that this work was taking place in partnership with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority

(GMCA), the other nine Greater Manchester local authorities and Homes England. She stated that Homes England also helped the city region with revenue funding for de-risking brownfield sites. She welcomed that, following a recent announcement, the Affordable Homes Programme could now be used for the re-provision of social housing, which would be beneficial in areas such as Victoria North. In response to a question from the Chair about what role the Council could play in enabling residents to access homes in open-market sales, where they were having to compete with investors, she stated that the Council had limited ability to influence this but, for developments where the Council was working in partnerships, such as joint ventures, it was expected that a significant amount of the homes would be for the benefit of Manchester residents.

In response to a question about supply and demand of housing, the Strategic Lead (Housing Strategy and Policy) reported that, due to population growth, there was an under-supply of approximately 500 homes per year in the city so an ambitious housing strategy was needed, considering the different types and tenure of housing needed, different income levels and constraints on the availability of land in different parts of the city. In response to a question about the figure in the report on homes being built close to public transport, he clarified that this meant within 500m of a Metrolink, Rail or Bus Station, and not just a bus stop.

In response to a Member's question the Head of Strategic Housing confirmed that the Enabling Independence Accommodation Strategy would include people with a physical disability. In response to question about cladding, he informed Members about the Building Safety Group, which the Council had established immediately following the Grenfell Fire in London, stating that this had now developed into a Greater Manchester-wide group, led by the Fire Service, and that a lot of work was taking place in relation to building safety; however, he reported that there were hundreds of high rise buildings in the city, many with cladding and wooden balconies, and that some developers had still not signed the Government's pledge to remove cladding. He added that the next challenge would be the safety of medium-rise buildings. He reported that there was information on the Manchester Move website about the number of households on the waiting list, including what band they were in and how many bedrooms they needed, along with estimated waiting times, and he offered to share this link with Members.

The Strategic Director (Growth and Development) acknowledged the Member's comments about the provision of wider amenities in a city with a growing population. She stated that population growth was monitored, using the Manchester City Council Forecasting Model, and she outlined some of the challenges with planning for amenities in areas with new housing developments, particularly where a number of housing developers were involved, stating that this included challenges with funding where the Government Departments wanted to see that increased demand was there before committing additional resources, rather than looking ahead to the impact of housing developments which were in the pipeline; however, she stated that for large scale development plans, such as Victoria North, the Council was trying to design this in from the outset. The Director of Development reported that the district centre regeneration programmes also enabled new spaces to be created for healthcare infrastructure. In response to a question from the Chair, he explained how the amount of Section 106 funding for housing affordability was calculated and

that it could be used in a different area, reporting that the Council was keen to make the best use of this funding, prioritising social rents, more affordable tenures and low carbon homes.

Decision:

That the Committee will receive an update on this work in the next municipal year.

[Councillor Johns declared a personal interest as someone affected by cladding issues, following a reference to this during the Committee's discussion.]

ERSC/23/31 This City Programme Update

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director (Growth and Development) which outlined the significant progress to date in the formation, constitution and governance of This City, the Council's wholly owned housing delivery vehicle, and also in the spearheading of the construction of its maiden scheme, Rodney Street, alongside the development of a long-term business plan.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Company formation and initial business planning;
- Phase 1 developments;
- Pipeline of development – Phase 2;
- Investment partnership(s); and
- Recruitment.

Key points and queries that arose from the Committee's discussions included:

- To welcome the work taking place;
- Would the rented homes be retained in the rented sector to ensure low-cost rents in the long-term;
- Communication with and involvement of Ward Councillors on Phase 2 development and future phases;
- The housing allocation process for these developments and the importance of building mixed communities; and
- Governance arrangements.

The Deputy Executive Member for Housing and Development confirmed that the rents would be within the Council's control and that the homes would not be eligible for right-to-buy.

The Executive Member for Housing and Development reported that there were outline ideas for Phase 2 but that this would be discussed with local Councillors. He stated that the Council was looking to use a Local Lettings Policy to get a good mixed community in the developments, including using a local connection as part of the criteria. He expressed concern that the Local Housing Allowance had been frozen for a number of years, while market rents were increasing, and called on the Government to increase this. In response to a Member's question, he confirmed that

Ward Councillors would be involved, with Council officers, in the naming of the buildings in their area.

In response to a Member's question about whether the proportion of affordable housing would increase as debts were paid down on individual developments, Jason Hingley, Director of This City, confirmed that this was the intention.

The Director of Development explained the governance arrangements for This City, which included a Strategic Programme Board, a Non-Executive Board and checks and balances on decision-making. He stated that there would be intensive work over the next six months to get an investor partner on board, following which early consultation with Ward Councillors could take place, most likely next year.

The Executive Member for Housing and Development acknowledged the importance of a Member's point about This City being representative of the communities it served, including in leadership roles, stating that there was a degree of diversity in the Non-Executive Board and that this was something that the Council was committed to.

Decision:

To note the report and that the Committee would continue to monitor this work.

ERSC/23/32 How the Council works with MHPP (Manchester Housing Providers Partnership) and the Private Rented Sector

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director (Growth and Development) which provided an overview on how the Council worked with partners in the MHPP and within the Private Rented Sector to achieve the Council's strategic objectives. It also provided an introduction to the Council's role as a good landlord following the move to bring the homes previously managed by Northwards Housing back in-house.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- The review of the MHPP;
- How the Council worked with MHPP to deliver affordable homes, improve outcomes for existing residents across Manchester and meet the city's strategic objectives;
- The Private Rented Sector, including selective licensing and short-term lets; and
- The Council's role as a good landlord.

Key points and queries that arose from the Committee's discussions included:

- The importance of supporting vulnerable residents to understand their rights, noting that some groups, including refugees, might not be aware of sources of advice, such as Citizens Advice, and might also face other barriers such as language barriers and lack of trust in institutions;

- Selective licensing, including the future for areas where schemes were coming to an end and areas for the next phase;
- Short-term lets and their impact on the local housing market;
- Concern about increasing rents and the freezing of the Local Housing Allowance; and
- Whether MHPP was being used to secure improvements from social housing providers, for example, in the time taken for repairs to be carried out, noting that this seemed to have got worse.

In response to a Member's concerns about a particular street in his ward, the Executive Member for Housing and Development asked to be provided with further information so that this could be addressed, in consultation with the Member.

The Executive Member for Housing and Development reported that Citizens Advice had previously had a strong presence in local communities, including libraries, but that this had reduced, following a funding cut from the Government; however, he reported that Citizens Advice were still providing advice services, including running pop-up advice sessions, and he stated that it was important that people were signposted to this support, using different languages and methods. He highlighted that housing associations provided advice to their tenants on a range of issues and that information on available support, including for people renting in the Private Rented Sector, was on the Council's website.

The Executive Member for Housing and Development stated that selective licensing targeted the lower segments of the private rented sector, as referred to in the table at 4.2 in the report. He reported that there was good evidence of the impact of selective licensing but that schemes ended after 5 years and that the Council was monitoring the situation after these schemes had ended and looking at what other interventions could be used to keep housing standards in these areas higher.

The Executive Member for Housing and Development highlighted the information in the report on short-term lets and the Council's response to the Government consultation on this, in which the Council had asked for greater regulation of this area. In response to a question about whether planning covenants could be used to restrict the use of properties for short-term lets, the Strategic Director (Growth and Development) stated that this could be used where the Council had a land-interest in the development. In response to a further question about whether covenants could also be put in place through the Planning Committee, she stated that she would consult with colleagues in the Planning Department and provide a response.

In response to a Member's question, the Executive Member for Housing and Development informed the Committee about work taking place at a neighbourhood level to get housing providers working together to address local issues, while acknowledging that this was not yet working well in all areas. He acknowledged a Member's comment about the importance of ensuring the provision of purpose-built student accommodation which was affordable and would, therefore, free up family homes for families, stating that this would be addressed through the Local Plan and was monitored by looking at data on Council Tax exemptions. In response to a question about the Private Rented Sector, he advised that he hoped that the Good Landlord Charter would play an important role in improving this sector.

The Director of Housing Services reported that there had been a big spike in calls about damp and mould following the tragic death of Awaab Ishak in Rochdale and that the Council was undertaking a programme of works to address these. He informed the Committee that all of the properties had been visited, provided they had been able to access them, and that the triaging of damp and mould issues had been greatly improved. He offered to provide Members with further data on this. He highlighted the £25m of capital investment which had been approved for key priorities, including Decent Homes.

The Compliance and Enforcement Specialist reported that the Housing Compliance Team had recruited Engagement Officers to work with vulnerable residents and that key leaflets, including on damp and mould, were translated into the most common community languages.

The Executive Member for Housing and Development reported that MHPP was a positive partnership and a useful forum but he acknowledged that a lot of providers had a backlog of repairs for a range of reasons, although officers and Members were putting pressure on providers to address this and to provide a good service to their tenants. He stated that he would feed back a Member's comment about some housing providers not attending meetings. He stated that the list of areas for potential future selective licensing schemes was being reviewed and that Members would be consulted with. In response to a Member's comments about some landlords not accepting tenants in receipt of benefits, he expressed concern about this, stating that it was illegal although hard to enforce and that this needed to be part of the Good Landlord Charter. In response to a question from the Chair, he stated that the Council's housing staff received training to identify other issues, such as welfare concerns or other repair issues, when they went into a tenant's home to carry out a repair. The Director of Housing Services reported that, if a property was requiring multiple repairs, the service would look into the underlying reasons for this and whether there was a need to invest in improvements.

In response to a Member's question, the Chair stated that he would clarify with officers the timing of a report on selective licensing. The Member asked that this include information on the movement of homes upwards from the bottom segments of the private rented sector, in relation to table X at 4.2 in the report.

Decisions:

1. To request a more detailed report on the Council's role as a Good Landlord.
2. To receive a report on short-term lets, focusing both on regulating their use and on what additional supply of accommodation can be put in place as an alternative, including information on who is using short-term lets and what they are looking for in their accommodation.
3. To note that the Chair will discuss with officers the timing of a report on selective licensing.

4. To note that the Strategic Director (Growth and Development) will consult with colleagues in the Planning Department and respond "on whether covenants could also be put in place through the Planning Committee", with reference to restricting the use of short-term lets and helping Manchester people to purchase property where they are being outcompeted by external investors.

ERSC/23/33 Strategic approach to developments of social homes via a city-wide New Build Local Lettings Policy (LLP)

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director (Growth and Development) which proposed a strategic response in the form of a New Build Local Lettings Policy (LLP) for all new developments of social homes to be let at social or affordable rent.

The Committee was invited to comment on the report prior to its submission to the Executive.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Background information;
- Developing sustainable communities;
- The proposed New Build Local Lettings Policy, which would apply only to "general needs" properties at first let;
- The effect of restricted lettings; and
- The equalities impact of the policy.

Key points and queries that arose from the Committee's discussions included:

- To welcome the report and recognise the important issues it addressed;
- That the name might suggest that it applied to all new build properties;
- Had the percentage allocated to each of the three categories been modelled to check it met the needs of the housing register; and
- Why was living in an adjacent ward taken into account under criteria (i) in the second category but adjacent wards were not taken into account under the other criteria in this category.

The Head of Strategic Housing reported that it was not possible to reflect the numbers on the waiting list. He explained that this policy was an attempt to deal with the new social housing which was becoming available and that the split between the three categories had been agreed with Ward Councillors for Miles Platting and Newton Health, where new social housing had been built. He informed Members that the purpose of this policy was to create a standard lettings policy that could be used for any new build social housing but that it could be adapted for new developments in particular areas, where this was agreed with local Ward Councillors, including amending the criteria in relation to adjacent wards. A Member commented that it would be useful to have a data-informed approach to the split between the three categories. The Head of Strategic Housing stated that he would look into this. He explained that in 2020 any priority relating to working households had been removed from social housing allocation but that a number of Members had highlighted the importance of mixed communities, including working households,

leading to the proposal for 50% of lettings in new builds to be allocated to working households.

The Executive Member for Housing and Development reported that it was useful to have this standard policy as a baseline but that it could be tailored for individual developments, recognising that needs varied across the city.

The Chair commented that it was not clear from the report that this was a standard template which could be adapted for different developments in different parts of the city and suggested that this be made clearer in the report before it was submitted to the Executive.

Decisions

To commend the New Build Local Lettings Policy to the Executive, subject to:

- The information submitted to the Executive providing greater clarity that this is a standard template and that the allocation policy can be adapted for individual developments.
- Improved quantitative information being provided to the Executive when they consider this item.

[Councillor Richards declared a personal and prejudicial interest, having been involved in the development of this policy when she was an Executive Member and left the room for this item.]

ERSC/23/34 Overview Report

A report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit was submitted. The overview report contained key decisions within the Committee's remit, responses to previous recommendations and the Committee's work programme, which the Committee was asked to approve.

The Chair highlighted that a report on the Cultural Strategy had been added to the agenda for the February meeting. He advised that he was considering theming this meeting around culture and tourism and suggested that the report on short-term lets be added to the agenda for that meeting and that it also include a general update on hotel accommodation. He recommended that the item on Design for Life and Rightsizing be removed from the "to be scheduled" list, as this had been included in the Housing Strategy report.

Decision:

That the Committee note the report and agree the work programme, subject to the above comments.

Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 18 July 2023

Present:

Councillor Hitchen (in the chair)

Councillors Azra Ali, Doswell, Good, Ogunbambo, Priest, Rawson, Sheikh, Whiston and Wills

Also present:

Councillor Hacking, Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure

Councillor Igbon, Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods

Councillor T Robinson, Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care

Councillor Davies, Lead Member for Age Friendly

Elaine Unegbu, Chair of the Age Friendly Manchester Older People's Board

CESC/23/29 Minutes

Decision: That the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 20 June 2023, be approved as a correct record.

CESC/23/30 Age Friendly Manchester Refreshed Strategy 2023-2028

The committee considered a report of the Director of Public Health and the Age Friendly Manchester Programme Lead which described how the new Age Friendly Strategy Manchester: A City for Life 2023– 28 built on previous progress, provided a series of responses to the ongoing impact felt by some older people to the pandemic and the struggles faced by the cost-of-living crisis for many people aged over 50 and outlined a series of priorities and commitments to drive better outcomes.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Key statistics around age, population, life expectancy and unemployment amongst over 50s;
- How the refreshed Strategy was developed;
- How the refreshed Strategy aligned with the Council's priorities and other key strategies;
- The themes of the refreshed Strategy:
 - Being heard and age equity;
 - Age friendly neighbourhoods where we can all age in peace;
 - Age friendly services which will support us to age well; and
 - Work and money

- An initial 18-month delivery plan was being developed; and
- How progress would be monitored.

Key points and queries that arose from the committee's discussion included:

- Welcoming the refresh;
- Expressing concern that not all complexities and intersectionalities experienced by older people were reflected in the report;
- The different experiences and challenges faced by 50-year-olds and 80-year-olds;
- The need for more flexibility with regards to rightsizing;
- That the impact on Age Friendly should be included in all committee reports;
- The experiences of older people in the LGBTQ+ community;
- Requesting further information on the delivery plan;
- Requesting background information on the disproportionate effects of age on different groups;
- Querying what activities and services were provided for older people in each ward;
- How the work of the Strategy linked with the Council's Highways service to improve existing highways, public spaces and access;
- What was being done to help older people with the cost-of-living crisis;
- Whether all libraries were accessible by bus;
- Whether increased public toilet provisions would be included in the delivery plan; and
- Requesting further information on the findings of the research undertaken by Manchester University in collaboration with Age Friendly Manchester on the impacts of the pandemic on older people living in areas of multiple deprivation.

The Programme Lead – Age Friendly Manchester explained that the refreshed Strategy provided the vision for the next five years with four key themes. He stated that extensive consultation with older people had been undertaken and built on the progress made over the past 20 years. He stated that the Strategy provided practical responses to the lived experience of older people, such as the cost-of-living crisis and the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care stated that communities were defined by their older people and thanked officers for their work on this and residents for their involvement and engagement. He also wished to place on record his thanks to former Councillor Eddy Newman who had driven this work in his former role as Lead Member for Age Friendly Manchester.

The Chair of the Age Friendly Manchester Older People's Board explained that she had been involved in the Board for 18 years and highlighted the work undertaken by the Council and the Board. She noted that there was more work to be done, particularly around employment, access and the cost-of-living crisis.

The Lead Member for Age Friendly Manchester highlighted Manchester's Age Friendly approach and that this work was ongoing, highly consultative among a range of groups, and would be continuously developed.

In response to a point raised regarding the need to reflect the different experiences between age groups, the Programme Lead – Age Friendly Manchester acknowledged the different experiences felt by a 50-year-old and an 80-year-old. He stated that there were 3 different age categories, for those up to state pension age, for 66- to 80-year-olds and for over 80s. He stated that the delivery plan included different responses to different age ranges and circumstances. He stated that highlights of the delivery plan could be shared with the committee once developed.

The Programme Lead – Age Friendly Manchester acknowledged difficulties in finding suitable housing provisions for older people but explained that the approach of Age Friendly Manchester was to provide a range of options to suit everyone, noting that social care was not suitable for all older people. Members were advised that the Council was hoping to develop an LGBT-affirmative extra-care scheme in Whalley Range. He also explained that the Council currently works with housing providers to have dynamic and supportive conversations with tenants to best meet their needs.

Further to this, members were informed that the Council worked with Pride in Ageing, which was a foundation-led initiative of LGBTQ+ people working in Manchester to share and promote their lived experiences and to inform foundations such as Pride in Practice. The Programme Lead – Age Friendly Manchester stated that the Council was examining how this work could also be shared within the care sector and that a representative of Pride in Ageing was included in the membership of the Older People's Board.

In response to a recommendation to include an Age Friendly Impact Assessment in all committee reports, the Programme Lead – Age Friendly Manchester stated that this was something he and his team were eager to implement and would provide value to reports. It was highlighted that age was a protected characteristic which was included in the overall Equality Impact Assessment.

The Programme Lead – Age Friendly Manchester explained that work was ongoing to develop the delivery plan with key partners. It was anticipated that a final draft would be available in September for launch in autumn and this could be provided to the committee.

Members were informed that the State of Ageing report would provide detail on the breadths of experiences of older people and would provide a baseline for monitoring progress over the Strategy's lifespan.

In response to a member's query on work with the Highways service, the Programme Lead - Age Friendly Manchester stated that there were examples of

success in changing bus routes as a result of lobbying, for example the rerouting of a bus service in Old Moat and Fallowfield to improve access for residents. He acknowledged that this was challenging to do on a wider scale, but it was hoped that the greater powers over public transport awarded by the devolution trailblazer for Greater Manchester would enable the GM Ageing Hub to have greater influence in shaping such decisions and structural changes to bus routes.

It was stated that information on cost-of-living support needed to be clear and accessible to older people. The Programme Lead – Age Friendly Manchester emphasised that a ‘digital by default’ approach was not encouraged, and that face-to-face dialogue and printed information was available. He stated that libraries were vital in providing these services and a free, biannual newsletter would be relaunched and available from libraries, supermarkets and community centres to share information on the cost-of-living support available.

Members were advised that all libraries within Manchester were of an Age Friendly service standard.

In response to a query regarding whether increased public toilet provisions would be included in the delivery plan, the Programme Lead – Age Friendly Manchester explained that there were opportunities to improve provisions through developments and the use of Equality Impact Assessments. He advised of the ‘Take a Seat’ campaign, which worked with cafes and other facilities to provide free access to toilets and acknowledged that this campaign needed to be rolled out into more neighbourhoods.

The committee was informed that the delivery plan was being developed by those involved in its implementation and that most of these were external partners.

In summarising, the Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care stated that he wanted to raise the work of Age Friendly further up the political agenda. He explained that the Strategy would be considered by the Senior Management Team, the Executive Strategy Group and Full Council and thanked the committee for their comments.

The Chair thanked the Executive Member and officers for their attendance and thanked the Chair of the Age Friendly Manchester Older People’s Board for her 17 years’ service to the Board.

Decision:

That the committee

1. notes the report;
2. requests that the delivery plan be provided to a future meeting for consideration; and

3. recommends that Age Friendly be promoted in the Equality Impact Assessments of all committee reports.

CESC/23/31 Community Events 2023/24

The committee considered a report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) which provided a context for the current operating environment for events and how the ongoing development of the events programme continues to align with the City Council's Events Strategy. It provided additional insight on the Community Events programme and updates on the progress made against previously identified areas of development and improvement to support community events.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background to the Manchester Events Strategy;
- The event programme for 2023;
- The Community Events Fund (CEF) Programme, and the challenges faced by this;
- The funding and geographic spread of the Community Events Programme;
- The eligibility criteria for Community Events Funding;
- Confirmation that bonfire and firework events would not be reinstated going forward;
- How sustainability was considered at events funded by the CEF; and
- Work would be undertaken with the Equalities, Diversity, and Inclusion team to progress to identify how the staging of events can potentially impact on people with protected characteristics who are beyond the event footprint and may fall outside of the direct responsibility of the event organiser.

Key points and queries that arose from the committee's discussions included:

- Welcoming the Council's support of community events;
- Requesting clarification on a number of events listed in the report which received CEF funding but did not appear to meet the criteria for such funding;
- How external businesses and traders attending events are encouraged to comply with the Council's commitment to reducing single-use plastics;
- The need to strengthen sustainability requirements for events, noting that there is no requirement to acknowledge the Sustainability Check when booking Council-owned land for events;
- Whether there would be a public awareness campaign on upcoming legislation to ban retailers, takeaways, food vendors and the hospitality industry providing single-use cutlery, plates and bowls;
- How the geographic spread of events within the city could be improved;
- What events will be included in the programme of autumn and winter activities to replace bonfire displays;
- How income generated by events benefits local communities;

- The need to hold more free events and to diversify the locations where these events are held;
- Why Pride events were included within the report, given that major events fall under the remit of the Economy and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee;
- What local events are delivered in individual neighbourhoods; and
- How many events received CEF funding recurrently and whether this impacted the ability for new events to benefit from this funding.

The Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure explained that the Council's Events Strategy was adopted in 2019 and acknowledged the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and cost-of-living crisis on events across the city. He stated that this had changed the types of and opportunities for events taking place in Manchester and the capacity and venue offers in the city.

The Head of Events Development explained that 13 of the events listed within the report were funded by CEF with the remainder funded or facilitated through other mechanisms. He stated that a separate list of all events funded by CEF could be provided to members, which would demonstrate how these events met the criteria for CEF funding.

Members were advised that the use of the term 'citywide' when referring to primary event location within the report related to where attendees were drawn from. The Head of Events Development highlighted that certain major events were held in one location, such as a park, but attendees would travel from across and beyond the city to attend.

In response to queries around sustainability and single-use plastics, the Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods stated that a citywide licensing consultation was currently underway with a specific section on sustainability and members would have sight of this before being considered by the Executive. She also explained that a refresh of the Parks Strategy was being undertaken and would examine how the Council acted sustainably and how events were run in line with this.

The Parks Lead highlighted that it was often easier for large-scale commercial events to reduce the use of single-use plastics and cited the Christmas Markets as an example of this and highlighted that Parklife Festival was trialling a cup return scheme. It was hoped that trialling such schemes and measures within large events would create guidance around best practice which could be shared with smaller organisations and community groups.

It was also explained that event bookers would be asked the detail their considerations of sustainability measures from 2024.

In response to the Chair's query regarding whether there would be a public awareness campaign on upcoming legislation to single-use items within the hospitality sector, the Parks Lead stated that marketing and educational material was

still awaited from the government. She advised that early engagement work had been undertaken with businesses across the city to advise them of changes.

The Director of Neighbourhood Delivery recognised that local groups were hosting events across the city regularly which the Council was unaware of and that the Council wanted to support these groups to ensure that events were safe, regardless of their scale. He stated that the Council would be happy to provide advice to any group holding an event.

The Parks Lead advised that local engagement had been undertaken to ensure a winter programme of events and activities that reflected what communities wanted. She explained that a range of activities and events were held in 2022 across all parks which previously held bonfire displays. It was agreed that further detail on this would be provided in a future report.

The committee was advised that the Council had a long-standing history of commercial and community events taking place in parks and this had been a theme in the Parks Strategy launched in 2017. The Parks Lead explained that parks were subsidised through investment from the Council but there remained a need to generate income for maintenance. She stated that revenue from events was used to reduce the gap between income and expenditure and also helped to ensure the quality of parks. It was also stated that the Council was looking at investment plans at a number of sites, including Platt Fields, to promote future opportunities for investment.

The Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods acknowledged members' points regarding the need for more free events and to diversify the location of these across the city. She noted that access to infrastructure can be a challenge in smaller parks but noted that it was a key consideration in the refresh of the Parks Strategy.

It was clarified that the Events team fund the Manchester Pride Parade and not events within the Gay Village. This funding was used to support road closures and the overall operation of the Parade, which was felt to be justified as a free-to-access element of the Pride weekend.

The Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure explained that larger events had a significant economic impact and so, fell under the remit of the Economy and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee whilst the delivery and operational elements of events formed part of the Council's Events Strategy.

In response to a query from the Chair regarding CEF-funded events which took place across local communities/neighbourhoods and whether these were spread evenly across all 32 wards, the Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods explained that any events which were held in parks fell under the remit of Environment, Climate Change and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Committee and stated that an update on these kinds of events would be included in the next Parks Strategy report to that committee.

Detail on the number of recurring events in receipt of CEF funding would be provided outside of the meeting.

The Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) advised that reports on major events were considered by the Economy and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee due to their economic impact on the city, whereas smaller events were within the remit of this committee due to their impact on and benefits for communities. He noted that there was a limited amount of CEF funding and that more targeted work was needed to identify the scale and demographics of attendees. It was stated that there were lots of neighbourhood-based events which the Council was not involved in and there were no central funding schemes available for these. He provided assurances that the Events and Neighbourhoods teams would continue to explore ways to increase investment opportunities for neighbourhood events.

Decision:

That the committee

1. notes the report;
2. requests further information on all CEF-funded events, including how these meet the criteria for funding, their reach and location, and whether these are recurring events;
3. requests that a further report be provided in 6 months; and
4. requests that information on the geographical reach of events be provided for each event included in future reports.

CESC/23/32 Overview Report

The committee considered a report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit which 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.

Members requested that the work programme for September's meeting be amended to provide a more detailed scope on the Communities of Identity report and to request that information on how the Council engaged with the student population to promote and ensure their safety be provided in the Community Safety Strategy report. These requests would be relayed to officers.

A query was also raised regarding the date of the first meeting of the committee's Task and Finish Group on crime and antisocial behaviour. Members were advised in response that the Committee Officer would email them outside of the meeting for their availability and that the first meeting would be held in September.

Decision:

That the report be noted, and the work programme agreed.

Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 5 September 2023

Present:

Councillor Hitchen (Chair) – in the Chair

Councillors Doswell, Good, Ogunbambo, Rawson, Sheikh, Whiston and Wills

Also present:

Councillor Midgley, Deputy Leader

Sandy Koujou, Caribbean African Health Network

Saria Khalifa, NESTAC

Apologies: Councillor Azra Ali, Appleby and Priest

CESC/23/34 Minutes

In moving the minutes, the Chair requested an update on the committee's request made at the previous meeting for further information on CEF-funded events. The Governance and Scrutiny Team Leader confirmed that this request had been accepted since the agenda was published and that the information would be shared with members at the earliest opportunity.

Decision: That the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 18 July 2023, be approved as a correct record.

CESC/23/35 Communities of Identity

The committee considered a report of the Joint Director of Equality and Engagement - NHS GM Integrated Care (Manchester locality) and Manchester City Council which detailed the inequalities faced by 'communities of identity' within the city and how specific groups accessed and were supported by Council services to improve their experience and outcomes.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- An introduction and background;
- The definition of 'Communities of Identity';
- The Council's intersectional approach to inequality and insights into communities;
- Key learning and areas for development;
- The 3 equality objectives to support the city in becoming more progressive and equitable:
 - Knowing Manchester better
 - Improving life chances
 - Celebrating our diversity
- Examples of how these objectives were being delivered on.

Key points and queries that arose from the committee's discussion included:

- What work was being undertaken to support Bangladesh, Pakistan and African Muslim women to enter the workplace;
- How the Communities of Identity work would improve health outcomes;
- Noting the gap in education and employment opportunities for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, and querying how the Council would try to reduce the stigma for this community;
- Noting that there was no mention of class as an intersectionality;
- How the learning from work on Communities of Identity would be utilised in the Council's approach to Equality Impact Assessments;
- Requesting that further information on the SEND activities offered during the school holidays be provided;
- How confident officers were that those groups who work with Communities of Identity were being reached;
- Noting the stark median age at death of Asian/Asian British background males with profound and multiple learning disability and the higher mortality in pregnancy rate amongst Black and Asian women, and querying what could be done to improve this;
- Requesting that quantified data be clearer in future reports;
- Requesting that the financial and revenue implications of delivering this work be included in future reports; and
- Requesting that a benchmarking exercise be undertaken to quantify how well Manchester was doing in its work with Communities of Identity against other core cities.

The Deputy Leader stated that Communities of Identity was last reported on in 2016 and that this report aimed to explain how the Council understands and engages with communities.

The Joint Director of Equality and Engagement expressed her thanks to the University of Manchester, Lancaster University, the Assistant Chief Executive and his team, the Equalities Specialist and a number of Council departments who had contributed to the report. She explained that Communities of Identity referred to 'people who share particular characteristics connected to their heritage, belief system or identities that contribute to their day-to-day lives' and stated that the report focused on communities that experienced greater and more entrenched inequalities, such as those communities which experienced racial inequality, disabled people and older people. Other communities, such as LGBTQI people, were also recognised as having experience of entrenched inequalities and the committee was informed that a more detailed analysis of these experiences would be provided at the next meeting.

The Joint Director of Equality and Engagement highlighted some data sources, such as the recent Census, and noted that there was still work to be done to identify the impacts of inequalities in an intersectional manner and to remove some key barriers.

The Local Offer and Engagement Manager and the SEND Engagement and Young Carers Lead attended the meeting and provided an overview of their work to co-produce a summer activity offer with parents and carers of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

In response to the committee's queries, the Joint Director of Equality and Engagement explained that work would be undertaken with the Work and Skills team to improve access to the workplace and that some work had already been undertaken to identify the barriers to employment faced by Pakistani and Bangladeshi women. A Joint Strategic Needs Analysis was also being undertaken for the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community and an Inclusion Health Group had been established to improve engagement. It was noted, however, that more work was required to improve cohesion between Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities and other communities.

Members were advised that Community Health Equity groups had completed a lot of work with particular communities and there was specific work being undertaken around breast screening with Pakistani women, as data indicated there was a lower uptake within this community. The Council was also working with BHA for Equality to assess experiences of primary care.

The Assistant Chief Executive explained that the Census had been a great resource for Communities of Identity and when looking at intersectionality. He highlighted that particular areas of interest could be reviewed in more detail to inform the committee and ongoing work.

In response to a member's query regarding how this learning would inform the Council's approach to Equality Impact Assessments (EIA), the Joint Director of Equality and Engagement stated that a refresh of the approach to Equality Impact Assessments was underway and that this would include detailed guidance with case studies on best practice for completing these Assessments. The Equalities team would also provide support for colleagues undertaking an EIA.

The committee was informed that a lot of work was being undertaken around community engagement. It was acknowledged that communities changed frequently and that there were some established communities and some new and developing ones so there was a need to change and evolve engagement methods. This was a theme under Making Manchester Fairer and focused on building trust with communities to work together.

In answer to a member's query regarding the greater breakdown of ethnicity, the Assistant Chief Executive explained that this was available for each ward through the Census and that this information would be provided outside of the meeting.

In respect of the Chair's queries around health inequalities experienced by Asian, Asian British and Black men and women, the Joint Director of Equality and Engagement explained that the report remained a live document which could be

updated to reflect the Council and local partners' responses to issues. She noted that there were some significantly entrenched structural inequalities within health and that some partners were undertaking work around learning difficulties, including liaising with ethnic minorities with learning difficulties to identify how to better engage with this community.

Further clarity was sought on whether the health outcomes of Communities of Identity were within the remit of this committee or the Health Scrutiny Committee.

She further highlighted that several initiatives were underway across the health service to reduce mortality rates amongst Black and Asian pregnant women and that these figures were decreasing. Work needed to continue to reduce this, and it was highlighted that this would require changes in behaviour and attitude.

In response to the Chair's query around how it would be ensured that delivery models for the Equality Objectives were placed into areas with the most need, the Assistant Chief Executive stated that this would need to be built into the Council's Corporate Plan, business plan, and budget with a recognition that tackling inequalities was of high importance, which he stated the Council had done over the past years. He highlighted the Council's cost-of-living support as an example of this, with granular evidence used to identify where need was greatest and to proportionately target resources to certain areas within Manchester.

The Chair wished officers good luck in their work to deliver the Equality Objectives and thanked guests for their attendance.

Decision:

That the committee

1. notes the progress made to date on delivering the Equality Objectives;
2. expresses their support for the approaches to working with communities and areas for further development outlined in the report;
3. requests further information on class as an intersectionality;
4. requests further information on the SEND activities on offer during school holidays within each ward;
5. requests a greater breakdown of information by ethnicity for each ward;
6. requests that quantified data be clearer in future reports;
7. requests that the financial and revenue implications of delivering this work be included in future reports;
8. recommends that Equality Implications be strengthened within committee reports to highlight how the sufficiency of service provisions within wards are taken into consideration for each report; and
9. requests that a benchmarking exercise be undertaken to quantify how well Manchester is doing in delivering the Equality Objectives against other core cities.

CESC/23/36 Domestic Abuse and Safety of Women and Girls

The committee considered a report of the Strategic Director – Neighbourhoods which summarised recent and current work to address domestic violence and abuse, including implementation of the Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy and the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and victim voice work, and provided an update on ongoing work to promote the safety of women and girls in the city.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- 75% of all offences recorded during 2022-23 were against women;
- Strong correlations between high volumes of domestic abuse incidents and areas of the city with the highest deprivation scores relating to income, employment, education and skills, and health and disability;
- The objectives and achievements of the Council's Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy;
- Training and development work;
- The work of Early Help Hubs;
- Work undertaken with perpetrators which was commissioned in conjunction with GMCA from Talk Listen Change (TLC);
- Work being undertaken to support children and young people affected by domestic abuse;
- Support and services for victims of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM);
- Support and services for male victims of domestic abuse;
- Conduct of Domestic Homicide Reviews;
- The Women's Night-time Safety Charter and Good Night Out Guide; and
- Current issues and challenges, such as demand for the Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) service.

Key points and queries that arose from the committee's discussion included:

- Noting that not all buildings in the city's parks were council-owned, and querying whether these facilities would be expected to take part in the Safe Spaces initiative;
- How domestic violence affected LGBT and asylum seeker/refugee communities;
- The importance of talking to primary school children about healthy relationships;
- How staff were trained to be trauma-informed;
- Requesting that members also receive the quarterly Performance Bulletins;
- The high level of repeat offences;
- Noting that, whilst domestic violence can occur anywhere, it was more prevalent in deprived areas;
- What the Council could do in collaboration with housing providers and Greater Manchester Police (GMP) to ensure perpetrators of domestic violence are removed from the home;
- Whether any preliminary findings were available from the work undertaken with the Independent Choices Greater Manchester Domestic Abuse Helpline

to better understand the recent change in distribution of volumes of calls across the city;

- What advice the Council would give to victims of spiking;
- Whether housing providers were also implementing a Sanctuary Scheme and whether this was consistent across the city;
- How the Council could provide quick interventions to those at risk of domestic violence;
- Whether there were areas within parks that were specifically tailored to women and girls;
- How the Council held GMP to account on the time taken to deal with domestic violence cases;
- Whether members could refer individual cases to the Gender Based Violence Board;
- Suggesting that a representative of Greater Manchester Police be invited to attend when considering future reports on domestic violence;
- How the Community Safety team works with the Neighbourhood teams to improve feelings of safety for residents when out at night; and
- Whether trends were noticeable within Domestic Homicide Reviews and what lessons are learnt from these.

The Deputy Leader stated that there continued to be high levels of domestic abuse and that the effect of this on survivors, families and children was traumatic and highlighted the work being undertaken in the city. The Strategic Lead Officer for Community Safety highlighted key issues around domestic abuse in Manchester and the service provision. She noted that there had been a decrease in the number of high-risk incidents which she believed was as a result of early intervention work. It was stated that the work on safety of women and girls was broader than that on domestic abuse but was included within the report as it was fundamental to the societal change required to address domestic abuse.

Representatives from the Caribbean African Health Network and NESTAC attended the meeting to provide an overview of their organisations and the services they provide, which the committee welcomed.

In response to members' queries, the Strategic Lead Officer for Community Safety explained that the Safe Spaces initiative was still in its early stages of development and engagement with the Libraries and Parks teams was underway. Further discussions would need to take place to identify appropriate premises to take part in the initiative and what would be required of staff to deliver this safely. It was confirmed that training would also be provided to the 'Friends of' groups.

The Domestic Abuse Reduction Manager advised that two Greater Manchester-based services had been commissioned to address domestic violence within the LGBTQI community. This included the Safe Accommodation project, which provided access to one-bedroom flats and wider outreach support for LGBTQI people, and an LGBT Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) provision. Manchester City

Council was the highest referrer to both of these schemes within Greater Manchester.

The Domestic Abuse Reduction Manager acknowledged the need to promote healthy relationships to young girls as well as boys, as some figures around their behaviour was of concern. Work on addressing this issue in primary schools was being led by Healthy Schools and was included in the Council's Domestic Abuse Strategy action plan.

The committee was informed that the Council was committed to ensuring that staff and partners have access to trauma-informed training. All IDVA staff, domestic abuse providers and MARAC partners were trauma-informed trained.

In response to a request from the committee, it was confirmed that the quarterly Performance Bulletins and Needs Assessments would be shared with members.

The Strategic Lead Officer for Community Safety shared members' concerns over the high level of repeat offences of domestic violence and emphasised the importance of understanding the impact of early intervention work and this would continue to be monitored.

With regards to the powers available to the Council, housing providers and Greater Manchester Police (GMP) to ensure perpetrators of domestic violence are removed from the family home, the Domestic Abuse Reduction Manager explained that there were measures in place to allow the police to remove a perpetrator from a property and Manchester had the highest number of these Orders secured within Greater Manchester. She further explained that the Domestic Abuse Act brought into force Domestic Abuse Protection Orders which GMP would be piloting from June 2024 and would provide more stringent measures to remove a perpetrator for longer and allow the imposition of monitor tags and curfews. The importance of early intervention work was reiterated to help victims remain in their home, community, and support network. Work was ongoing with the Homelessness team to increase access to the Sanctuary Scheme and other security measures.

There had been a significant increase in the number of people accessing the Sanctuary Scheme since 2021 and work was ongoing with housing providers to ensure a consistent approach with their offer. Further information on the approach of housing providers had been requested by officers.

It was confirmed that there were no preliminary findings available from the work undertaken with the Independent Choices Greater Manchester Domestic Abuse Helpline to better understand the recent change in distribution of volumes of calls across the city, but these would be shared once available.

The Strategic Lead Officer for Community Safety advised that work had been undertaken with partners to ensure an appropriate response to incidents of spiking and this would continue to be discussed.

In response to a query regarding possible quick interventions where there is a risk of domestic violence, the Strategic Lead Officer for Community Safety explained that this would be dependent on the individual circumstances.

The safety of women and girls in the city's parks was a major focus for the Parks team and were represented on the Safety of Women and Girls Board, which drove forward work on domestic abuse, sexual harassment, and other forms of Violence against women and girls, to ensure that suitable activities were available in parks. The Strategic Lead Officer for Community Safety advised that there were specific sports and leisure activities commissioned for women and girls.

In response to a question around how GMP were held to account, the committee was advised that there were a number of systems in place such as the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board and a forum for partners to discuss performance and delivery on the Domestic Abuse Strategy action plan. The GM Gender Based Violence Board was also highlighted as an example of a forum to raise issues with the GM Deputy Mayor. The Domestic Abuse Reduction Manager provided assurances that the Council worked closely with GMP on an operational and strategic level.

Members were advised that the Gender Based Violence Board did not review individual cases but that they could email the Community Safety team if they had any specific concerns about cases.

The Community Safety Policy and Performance Manager endeavoured to inquire whether Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) received data on the time taken to deal with domestic violence cases.

Street safety was acknowledged as a focus area within the report and there was significant work being undertaken to improve this, although it was noted that there was limited resource within the Community Safety team, and this needed to be a cross-council piece of work. The Council also worked closely with Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) to ensure safety of residents using public transport and a number of different projects had been funded with officers looking at rolling out similar schemes to those in Oldham and Rochdale. A further report could be provided on this with a focus on women and girls.

In response to queries around Domestic Homicide Reviews, the Community Safety Policy and Performance Manager explained that each Review generated an action plan to be dealt with either by a single agency or the Partnership. These action plans were tracked to identify themes, such as unconscious bias and services making every effort to maintain engagement with people they were working with. These themes are then assessed strategically by a range of partners and agencies.

In closing the discussion, the Chair asked guests what they would like the Council to do to improve domestic violence service provisions across Manchester. Sandy Koujou, of the Caribbean African Health Network, expressed that she would like to

see further help for the programmes already in operation and for the Council to promote the support available for victims and survivors. Saria Khalifa, of NESTAC, explained that she would like the Council to continue to encourage GMP to investigate incidents of domestic violence quickly and efficiently.

The Chair thanked guests for their attendance and their work in the community and thanked officers for their strategic work in championing victims and making Manchester safer.

Decision:

That the committee

1. notes the report;
2. requests that quarterly Performance Bulletins be shared with members;
3. looks forward to receiving a future report on the safety of women and girls, including the work and projects being undertaken to promote this across the city and how these are funded;
4. requests further information on the specific sports and leisure activities commissioned for women and girls and the suitable activities available for women and girls in individual parks; and
5. requests that enquiries are made with GMCA regarding data on the time taken for domestic violence incidents to be dealt with by GMP.

CESC/23/37 Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Impact Report 2023-26 Update

The committee considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive on the impact of the Our Manchester Voluntary and Community Sector grant programme (OMVCS) 2018-2023.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background to the Impact Report;
- The Council had invested £12 million into the OMVCS programme;
- Highlights and findings of the report, such as that over 588,000 service users had been supported across all of the 63 funded organisations;
- How the OMVCS fund aligned with the aims of the Our Manchester Strategy;
- Next steps for monitoring and reporting on the 2023-26 programme of funded activity.

Key points and queries that arose from the committee's discussion included:

- Welcoming the work of the voluntary sector;
- How officers had come to the figure that over 588,000 service users had been supported across all funded organisations, given that Manchester's population was 547,000;

- Whether the issues raised by those groups whose funding bids were unsuccessful had been resolved;
- Whether mentorships through the Conversation 2 Cash programme were followed up on; and
- Whether the mentorship programme could be extended to Wythenshawe; and
- If the progress and achievements of the funded work was monitored and evaluated.

In response to members' queries, the Policy and Programmes Manager (Communities and VCSE) noted that there was a statistical error with regards to the number of service users supported and that this figure represented the amount of contact with residents. The final version of the report would have an amended figure.

Assurances were provided that all issues raised following the allocation of funding had been resolved and that officers had signposted those unsuccessful in receiving funding to alternative support for funding and organisational development. A further report on the refreshed Infrastructure Contract would be provided to the committee in December 2023.

The Policy and Programmes Manager (Communities and VCSE) informed members that Conversation 2 Cash was a programme based in North Manchester which linked grassroots organisations to peer mentors within the VCSE sector to undertake development work. He advised that all peer mentors had received training with mentorships now underway. This was a specific piece of work which was undertaken as a result of the North Manchester inquiry, but the funding profile of the city demonstrated a shift away from funding to North Manchester, although he noted that there was not a robust data set to demonstrate funding contributions across the city. This was an ongoing piece of work and the Policy and Programmes Manager (Communities and VCSE) acknowledged that it was possible for a similar approach to be implemented in the south of the city in future.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Policy and Programmes Manager (Communities and VCSE) stated that there was a commitment to create an end-of-year report on the progress and achievements of organisations in receipt of funding and these could be brought to the committee for consideration.

In closing the discussion, the Chair thanked officers and voluntary organisations for their work. She acknowledged that the Council should have been able to deliver some of the services provided by VCSE groups but were unable to due to government cuts imposed over previous years.

Decision:

That the report be noted.

CESC/23/38 Overview Report

The committee considered a report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit which 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.

The Chair queried whether a report would be provided to the committee on the new Customer Relationship Management system. Officers agreed to look into this outside of the meeting and would provide an update for members.

Decision:

That the report be noted, and the work programme agreed.

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2023

Present:

Councillor Reid – in the Chair

Councillors Alijah, Amin, Bell, Gartside, Hewitson, Lovecy, McHale, Muse, Nunney, Sadler and Sharif Mahamed

Co-opted Voting Members:

Mr G Cleworth, Parent Governor Representative

Also present:

Councillor Rahman, Deputy Leader

Councillor Bridges, Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People

Councillor Butt, Deputy Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People

Councillor Hitchen, Chair of the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee

Superintendent Chris Downey, Greater Manchester Police (GMP)

Detective Inspector Chris Chadderton, GMP

Apologies:

Councillors Bano, Fletcher, Judge and Ludford

Canon S Mapledoram, Representative of the Diocese of Manchester

Ms L Smith, Primary Sector Teacher Representative

CYP/23/29

Minutes

Decision

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2023.

CYP/23/30

Youth Justice Business Plan 2023/24: Preventing and Diverting Children and Young People from the Criminal Justice System

The Committee considered the report and presentation of the Strategic Director of Children and Education Services which outlined the vision, priorities, performance, and impact being achieved in preventing and diverting children and young people from the criminal justice system.

Key points and themes in the report and presentation included:

- Vision and strategy;
- Governance and leadership arrangements;
- Youth Justice service model;
- Progress against priorities from 2022/23;
- Impact and feedback;
- Priorities for 2023/24; and
- Innovation and developments.

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

- To welcome the progress made and the joined-up working that was taking place;
- How robust was the diagnosis of Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD);
- Where schemes used mentors, how were they recruited and trained and did they reflect the culture and heritage of the children they were supporting;
- Requesting further detail of the early intervention work; and
- The over-representation of mixed heritage and black boys in the Criminal Justice system and what were officers doing to try to understand their lived experience.

In response to the question about FASD, the Assistant Director (Early Intervention and Prevention) reported that work was taking place to improve awareness of this from the Early Years. She advised that there was a higher prevalence of additional needs among children in the Youth Justice system and she outlined some of the support available, including speech and language therapy and psychotherapy, as well as the role of Personal Education Plans. She stated that it was important to ensure that children had the right diagnosis and to look behind the behaviour and acknowledged that this was an area for further work. In response to Members' questions, she outlined some of the work taking place in different parts of the city to prevent and divert children and young people from the criminal justice system including community pilots, work in schools and Youth Zones and work by Greater Manchester Police (GMP). She informed Members about the key elements of the early intervention work, which included bringing partners together to identify issues early, co-ordination and leadership, restorative practices and mentoring and looking at the wider offer for the family. In response to a Member's comments, she recognised that the role of communities and families was crucial and outlined some of the work taking place. In response to a Member's question, she confirmed that there were plans to use remand fostering in future. In response to a question about supporting young people into employment, she stated that the service worked with Careers Connect and the Virtual School and a range of partners on this. In response to a further question, she said that she could provide the Member with the requested data on the demographic profile of staff.

The Head of Youth Justice reported that Youth Justice mentors were volunteers from the community, that children were matched with volunteers from their own communities, that they tried to ensure that mentors were culturally appropriate and that they were well-trained. He outlined some of the other support his service offered to children which included a musician-in-residence and an artist-in-residence, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), psychotherapy, including art therapy and drama therapy, specialist Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and Restorative Practitioners, who taught children how to problem solve and worked with children on their identity and self-esteem. He stated that this work took place within a participatory youth practice framework and a trauma-informed, strength-based approach.

In response to a Member's question, the Strategic Director of Children and Education Services stated that engagement with children on preventative work needed to start

at the top end of primary school as it was a key stage of transition at which they were becoming more independent and influenced by peers.

Superintendent Chris Downey from GMP informed the Committee about child-centred policing, stating that in many circumstances this included not criminalising the child but that it needed to go beyond this and include taking the right action to prevent them from entering the Criminal Justice system in future, looking at the causes of the behaviour, how to prevent a reoccurrence and consulting with partners to find the right support for the child.

The Head of Youth Justice acknowledged that there was a lot of work to do to address the over-representation of mixed heritage and black boys in the Criminal Justice system. He stated that his service now had a very diverse staff, including in leadership and management roles, which helped to challenge their practice, language and decision-making, and that staff had received extensive training in this area. He stated that the participatory youth practice framework, which underpinned the work of the service, was about fairness, equality, children's rights and understanding children's lived experiences and how that had influenced their presenting behaviours, which staff then articulated to the courts. He stated that his service was collaborating with AFRUCA, to strengthen its approach, including having a Culture and Identity Worker who worked with children on identity and self-esteem. A Member stated that it was important for staff in Youth Justice to receive training to begin to understand and empathise with the lived experience of these children. The Assistant Director (Early Intervention and Prevention) reported that all staff in Youth Justice had attended Let's Talk About Race and Unconscious Bias training as well as work led by staff within the service. The Strategic Director of Children and Education Services reported that the Council was currently undertaking the discovery phase of the Child Friendly City work and that it was likely that identity, including racism and discrimination, would emerge as a key area of importance raised by the children and young people. Therefore, he suggested that the issues raised by the Member could be addressed in the report that the Committee was due to receive on the Child Friendly City work, as this would include how the city was responding to what young people said was important to them.

The Chair suggested that it would be useful for Members to undertake Unconscious Bias training.

In response to a question from the Chair on the use of stop-and-search on young black men, Superintendent Chris Downey acknowledged that this was disproportionate, although in Manchester the data indicated that the use of stop-and-search was intelligence-led, as approximately 20% of stop-and-searches had positive outcomes and around 18% led to arrests, which compared well nationally. He stated that the use of stop-and-search was targeted on crime hotspots and based on intelligence, being proactive in particular areas based on this, but that the result was that young black men were disproportionately stopped and searched and he outlined the work taking place to review why this was happening.

The Chair of the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee welcomed the report, while recognising that there was more work to be done. She asked officers about Manchester children attending schools outside of the city's boundaries and

joined up working across local authority boundaries. She also commented on the importance of embedding the poverty strand of equalities into this work and expressed concern about understaffing in the Complex Safeguarding Hub.

The Strategic Director of Children and Education Services assured Members that there were protocols for working across local authority boundaries and good relationships and communication with neighbouring authorities.

The Chair highlighted the role of and responsibility of schools in managing pupil behaviour, in partnership with families, communities and partner agencies, and how behaviour by Looked After Children was responded to and how that differed from the ways families might treat their own children who had committed a minor offence at home. She informed Members about the planned visit to Wetherby Young Offenders Institution in September. She expressed concern that a request to visit Barton Moss Secure Children's Home had not been approved. She also commented on the impact of the pandemic and delays in court hearings.

The Deputy Leader emphasised the depth and breadth of the work taking place and the complexity of the context this work was taking place in. He highlighted the impact of child poverty and commented, that, while Making Manchester Fairer would work to address this, more investment from the national Government was also needed.

Decision

That Unconscious Bias training be made available to Members.

CYP/23/31 Serious Youth Violence

The Committee considered the report and presentation of the Strategic Director of Neighbourhoods which outlined the vision, priorities and performance measures for the city set out in the Serious Violence Strategy.

Key points and themes in the report and presentation included:

- The national and local context;
- Governance and connectivity;
- Serious violence in Manchester;
- The Serious Violence Strategy, including the consultation and learning from reviews;
- Priority areas of activity;
- Implementation plan;
- The Serious Youth Violence Framework, a multi-agency method and holistic approach; and
- Measures of success.

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

- The use of "joint enterprise" against Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic young people;

- The treatment of young people who were arrested;
- The link between school exclusion and youth violence; and
- The context of these problems, including the city's large criminal economy, the demand for drugs from students and young professionals coming to the city, the need for large number of vulnerable young people to be exploited to support this, the challenges facing young people growing up in Manchester and the attraction to those young people of seeming to be able to make easy money.

Superintendent Chris Downey from GMP advised that joint enterprise was only rarely used and that he would endeavour to find the figures requested by the Member on its use by GMP and provide them to him. He acknowledged a Member's comments that being arrested could be a very traumatic experience for a young person, although, he advised, that in some situations, it was necessary. He stated that the use of handcuffs was now limited, rather than routine, that there were Mental Health professionals in custody suites who assessed everyone who was brought in and that young people would also have an "appropriate adult" to support them, either a family member or friend or someone from the commissioned Appropriate Adult service.

The Strategic Director of Children and Education Services highlighted that the Committee would be receiving a report on School Inclusion at its next meeting. He reported that work was taking place with GMP and colleagues from across Greater Manchester to make improvements in relation to young people held in custody, including reducing the number of young people placed in custody suites and reducing the length of time they were held there.

In response to a Member's question about work with faith groups, the Community Safety Lead stated that it was recognised that voluntary and community groups, including faith groups, had a wealth of expertise and skills and that they contributed to this work, and she provided an example of this work. She acknowledged the Member's comments about the wider context of serious youth violence and reported that the Joint Needs Assessment of serious and organised crime sought to understand these issues, looking at statistics and connections, and that work was taking place to respond to these different elements, for example, through the GMP Challenger Team and through the Complex Safeguarding Hub. She also recognised the importance of learning from best practice elsewhere and stated that the Greater Manchester Violence Reduction Unit had the resources to seek out and share best practice.

The Chair emphasised the importance of engaging with Manchester NHS Foundation Trust on this issue. She commented on police working with schools, expressing concern that the current arrangements were not working and asking the Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People to follow this up. She also expressed concern that it was easy for children to buy knives over the internet.

Decision

To note the report.

The Committee considered the report and presentation of the Strategic Director of Children and Education Services which summarised the partnership arrangements in place in Manchester to respond to children at risk of exploitation, including practice model, governance and assurance activity. In addition, key performance and assurance data articulated the progress and impact of the CSH in Manchester.

Key points and themes in the report and presentation included:

- An overview of the CSH and its purpose;
- The referrals to the CSH;
- Governance arrangements;
- Complex Safeguarding Team offer;
- Impact;
- Missing from Home and Care; and
- Priorities for the future.

In response to Members' questions about children missing from home and care, the Assistant Director (North and Complex Safeguarding) reported that the data was monitored in a monthly and annual report and that there had been an increase after the pandemic, with children being out in their communities more, noting that there was also always a rise in figures during the summer as children stayed out when the evenings were lighter. She reported that there were no missing children in Manchester who had not returned, stating that missing children were tracked and that there was a process, including strategy meetings, to ensure that they knew where children were.

In response to a Member's question about social media, Detective Inspector Chris Chadderton from GMP stated that there were a lot of referrals in relation to this. He reported that his service had Digital Media Investigators and that social media was monitored, within the legislation, to recover evidence and identify perpetrators seeking to abuse children. The Chair expressed concern that artificial intelligence could be used to abuse children.

The Strategic Director of Children and Education Services reported that, when children had been missing for a period of time, there was an internal mechanism to escalate this and that, when there were frequent episodes of an individual child going missing, the reasons for this were looked into. He reported that online grooming and exploitation was a key priority area for the Safeguarding Partnership, looking at how to raise awareness of the dangers and put safeguards in place.

A Member stated that the previous Committee visit to the offices at Greenheys Police Station had been useful and suggested arranging a further visit.

Decision

To endorse the proposed priorities for 2023/34.

A report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit was submitted. The overview report contained key decisions within the Committee's remit, responses to previous recommendations and the Committee's work programme, which the Committee was asked to approve.

The Chair informed Members that the date of the October meeting was likely to be moved.

Decision

To note the report and agree the work programme.

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 6 September 2023

Present:

Councillor Reid – in the Chair

Councillors N Ali, Amin, Fletcher, Gartside, Hewitson, Judge, Lovecy, Ludford, Muse and Nunney

Co-opted Voting Members:

Mr G Cleworth, Parent Governor Representative

Also present:

Councillor Bridges, Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People

Councillor Flanagan, Ward Councillor for Miles Platting and Newton Heath

Councillor Hitchen, Ward Councillor for Miles Platting and Newton Heath

Apologies:

Councillors Bell, McHale and Sharif Mahamed

Canon S Mapledoram, Representative of the Diocese of Manchester

Ms L Smith, Primary Sector Teacher Representative

Mr Y Yonis, Parent Governor Representative

CYP/23/34 Minutes

Decisions

1. To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2023.
2. To receive the minutes of the meetings of the Ofsted Subgroup held on 14 June 2023 and 26 July 2023.

CYP/23/35 Urgent Business – Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) in Schools

The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People reported that there was one school in Manchester which was confirmed as being affected by the RAAC issue and that this was All Saints C of E Primary School, Newton Heath. He informed Members that the Council was supporting the school, Ward Councillors had also offered support and that the school had been allocated a caseworker from the Department for Education (DfE). He advised that this issue would not have a significant impact on teaching within the school as the RAAC was in the school hall and that other community facilities were being considered, in case these were needed.

The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People outlined the national context of this issue, in particular a reduction in spending on rebuilding schools over the previous 13 years. He expressed concern about the lack of information provided to the Council by the DfE on which schools were affected and

which schools had not completed surveys, advising that the Council could provide support to schools with this. He advised that he would keep Councillors updated as the situation developed, including communicating with Ward Councillors with an affected school in their ward.

The Director of Education outlined to the Committee who the responsible body was for different types of schools. She explained that the Council was the responsible body for community maintained and voluntary controlled schools and that the relevant Diocese was responsible for voluntary aided schools. For academies in a multi-academy trust (MAT), the MAT was the responsible body while single academies which were not in a MAT were their own responsible body. She advised that all responsible bodies had been required to complete a survey about suspected RAAC within their school buildings. She reported that the Council had completed surveys for the 71 schools which it was the responsible body for early in 2023. She advised that she was aware that the Dioceses had completed the surveys for schools they were responsible for but that the Council had not yet been informed whether surveys had been completed for all the academies in Manchester, despite being in a position to help any who needed assistance. She reported that the DfE was reviewing surveys which were received and, where there was suspected RAAC, a specialist surveyor was being sent to inspect the building. She advised that where there was a confirmed presence of RAAC within a school building, the DfE was advising the schools to close off that part of the school and was allocating a caseworker to the school. She reported that there was no indication that there was RAAC within any of the schools for which the Council was the responsible body.

The Chair advised that the scrapping of the Building Schools for the Future Programme in 2010 had led to this problem.

Councillor Flanagan, Ward Councillor for Miles Platting and Newton Heath, expressed concern that there had been a failure of leadership from the Government on this issue, advising that it was not realistic to expect headteachers to identify RAAC and that every school, including private schools, should have been surveyed by a building inspector. He praised the response of Council officers, the Executive Member and the headteacher to the RAAC issue at All Saints Primary School and advised that everyone needed to work together to support affected schools. He called on Committee Members to lobby the Chancellor of Exchequer to change taxation laws so that top private schools, such as Eton, did not attract charitable status and advised that the additional funding from this should be spent on addressing the RAAC issue and that affected schools should be charged lower business rates. He advised Members that the Government should be instructing councils to inspect every building, noting that RAAC was used in a range of public buildings, and that the Government needed to provide extra funding to support this work.

Councillor Hitchen, Ward Councillor for Miles Platting and Newton Heath, thanked the Executive Member and Council officers within the Education Service, as well as the headteacher and staff of All Saints Primary School for their work to ensure that the pupils were able to return to school with as little disruption as possible. She reported that her ward was one of the most deprived wards in the city and the pandemic had had a negative impact on the children so she welcomed the work to

support the children and ensure they could continue their education. She criticised the DfE for spending £34 million on refurbishing its offices, for school closures and reductions in spending on school maintenance. She supported Councillor Flanagan's comments about tax breaks for private schools and the need to inspect other public buildings.

The Chair commented that she was putting the Committee's Representative of the Diocese of Manchester, which was the Diocese responsible for All Saints Primary School, in touch with the Ward Councillors.

The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People reported that Corporate Property were now undertaking an exercise to look at all Council buildings to ascertain whether any were affected by RAAC. He emphasised that the Council was totally committed to addressing the issue of RAAC in schools, including providing assistance to any academies who required it.

In response to a Member's question about secondary schools, the Director of Education reported that a lot of Manchester secondary schools were part of one of the Dioceses and the Council knew that surveys had been completed in relation to these schools but did not know whether surveys had been completed in relation to secondary schools which were academies. She reported, while schools affected by RAAC would be provided with a DfE caseworker and a specialist structural survey, it was not yet clear what longer term help would be provided by central Government.

In response to a Member's question, the Director of Education reported that it was too early to tell whether attendance levels had been affected by parents worrying about sending their children back to school due to RAAC but that this would be monitored. In response to a question about communication, she explained how the Council, including the Communications Team and Press Office, worked with all types of schools on communicating information to parents, as well as on dealing with the media.

The Chair advised that most of the city's Sure Start buildings had had their roofs replaced as part of planned maintenance but she expressed concern that a range of public buildings could be affected by RAAC. She highlighted some of the questions trade unions had put to the Secretary of State for Education in relation to the Government's response to RAAC in schools and advised that the Committee would be revisiting this issue.

Decision

That the Committee will receive an update on this at a future meeting.

CYP/23/36 School Places

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Children and Education Services which provided an overview of Manchester's current school age population and the numbers forecast for future academic years. It also detailed work previously undertaken to create additional school places to ensure Manchester met its sufficiency duty. The report showed that demand for school places continued to

increase and outlined the work that was planned to achieve sufficiency of places across the city in response to this continued growth.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- The school age population;
- Approach to securing sufficient school places; and
- Actions to secure sufficient school places in the primary phase, secondary phase and special schools.

The Head of Access and Sufficiency advised that, since the report had been published, two further schools had been secured for the city through the Free Schools Programme, one at post-16 and one at the secondary phase.

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

- Special school places and resourced provision within mainstream schools;
- Sixth form provision;
- Did planning for school places take into account children crossing local authority boundaries to attend school; and
- The increase in children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND).

The Head of Access and Sufficiency reported that it was planned to have a mixed offer for additional specialist places including further expansion of special schools and specialist units within mainstream schools, which enabled children to remain at the local school that they were originally allocated while accessing additional support and an adapted curriculum. She confirmed that children attending schools outside their local authority area were taken into account in her service's planning and forecasting and that information was shared between Greater Manchester local authorities. She reported that previously a significant number of Manchester children had attended schools outside of the city's boundaries, particularly at the secondary phase, but that more recently Manchester children were choosing to stay within the city for secondary school, which meant there were fewer places at Manchester schools available for children living outside of the city. In response to a Member's question, she confirmed that, if a family moved house during the academic year, they could apply for a school place from their new address, although in some circumstances it might be better for the child to remain at their existing school. She advised that, if there were no vacancies at their preferred schools, the Admissions Team would work with the family to identify a suitable school which was closer to their new home.

In response to a Member's questions about children who did not receive a place at one of their preferred schools, the Head of Access and Sufficiency reported that they would be allocated a place at the closest school with a vacancy and, depending on the distance, would be offered free travel. She reported that in some cases the Council had worked with particular schools on trying to transport children in groups so that they were not travelling alone to schools in different areas of the city. She

outlined work to create more school places in areas where there was pressure on school places, particularly in south Manchester and Wythenshawe.

The Director of Education reported that post-16 education was now at capacity and more places would be needed in future years and she outlined some of the work taking place to increase capacity, including working with sixth form providers to expand their provision, encouraging providers to apply to open additional post-16 provision through the Free School Process and conversations with the DfE about the allocation of capital funding. She also informed Members about ongoing discussions with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and the DfE about post-16 technical pathways.

The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People suggested that the Committee receive a separate report on post-16 provision at a future meeting. He praised how Council departments had worked together to provide additional school places during a period of significant population growth, when there was a shortage of available land and the Council did not have direct control over schools.

The Director of Education reported that the number of children with SEND had risen nationally and that Manchester had been asked by the DfE to lead for the north-west region on work in relation to SEND and early intervention. She highlighted the impact of the pandemic on children's development and mental health. A Member commented on the impact of poverty on children's development.

The Chair reported that the decline in the birth rate could mean that there would be less demand for primary school places, while recognising that there was a degree of uncertainty about future numbers due to families moving into the city, and that campuses which accommodated children from 3 to 19 would make it easier to manage fluctuating year group sizes. She also highlighted the impact of the planned expansion of free childcare.

The Head of Access and Sufficiency advised that, while the birth rate had gone down, by Key Stage 2 numbers had recovered in some schools, due to in-year migration, so it was difficult to reduce capacity as it was likely to be needed later. She reported that her service was monitoring the situation and working with schools in relation to this but, at present, it was not planned to reduce capacity in primary schools. She also highlighted that the regeneration projects taking place across the city were likely to bring more families into the city in future. The Chair highlighted the importance of ensuring there were sufficient amenities when new housing was built.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Director of Education reported that the number of children being Electively Home Educated (EHE) had risen during the pandemic and had not returned to pre-pandemic levels but was no longer continuing to rise. She informed the Committee that work was taking place to ascertain whether there was sufficiency in the childcare sector in the city to accommodate the expansion of free childcare. In response to a comment from the Chair about one-form-entry Roman Catholic primary schools in north Manchester, she reported that her service was working with the Diocese of Salford. She reported that her service and the Diocese were also involved in the discussions about large-scale housing developments such as Victoria North.

Decision

To receive an update report later in the year.

CYP/23/37 School Attendance in 2022/2023

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Children and Education Services which provided a summary of attendance data in Manchester for the academic year 2022/2023. It also reviewed some of the activity that had taken place over the course of the last academic year and outlined the strategic approach for 2023/2024 for Committee Members.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- National context;
- Attendance data overview in 2022/2023;
- Overview of attendance work in 2022/2023; and
- Strategic approach 2023/2024.

A Member expressed concern that Wythenshawe had worse school attendance than other areas of the city and asked what the Council and local Councillors could do to address this. The Statutory Lead for Attendance and Exclusions reported that his team had worked with a number of schools in Wythenshawe through the Targeted Support Meetings pilot and this had resulted in improved attendance levels in those schools. He advised that he was confident that when Targeted Support Meetings were rolled out to other schools in Wythenshawe, this would result in further improvements. The Director of Education advised that Ward Councillors could help through their role, for example, asking why a child was not in school or routinely asking about children's schooling when families approached them for help and she outlined some of the support families could access if they were struggling to get their child to school on time, through Early Help Hubs or the school. She reported that school attendance was looked at through the school quality assurance process and, where needed, schools could be invited to attend a Support and Challenge meeting to discuss this.

In response to Members' questions about Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN), the Statutory Lead for Attendance and Exclusions reported that these were requested by the individual school so there was variation in their use across the city, with some schools using it as early intervention and some using it as a last resort, although there were plans to provide more challenge to schools on their processes before issuing an FPN. He informed the Committee that 75% of FPNs were issued due to families taking holidays in term-time, with most of the rest being due to persistent absence.

The Chair highlighted that the groups with the lowest attendance levels were White Travellers of Irish Heritage and White Gypsy/Roma and asked what work was taking place to address this. The Statutory Lead for Attendance and Exclusions reported that the Council produced a model attendance policy for schools which included an appendix with guidance in relation to these groups and that Targeted Support

Meetings with schools could be used to formulate a strategy for improving the attendance of individual pupils.

The Chair advised that Ward Councillors in areas with the lowest attendance levels should be informed of this. She supported the development of a strategy to improve attendance levels for White Travellers of Irish Heritage and White Gypsy/Roma children.

Decisions

1. To note the progress made on school attendance in 2022/2023.
2. To approve the strategic approach for 2023/2024 which both meets the DfE non statutory requirements and improves support to schools.
3. To approve the strategic approach for 2023/2024 which looks to build a partnership consensus around attendance so that a multi-disciplinary approach is embedded across Children's Services and wider agencies.
4. To support the building of a 'think attendance' approach into Members' ward level activity so that attendance at school is encouraged and promoted with all residents.
5. To support the development of a strategy to improve attendance levels for White Travellers of Irish Heritage and White Gypsy/Roma children.

CYP/23/38 Manchester Inclusion Strategy Update

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Children and Education Services which provided an update on the implementation of Manchester's Inclusion Strategy 2022-2025 and an overview of the key priorities and next steps.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Manchester Inclusion Strategy activity since July 2022;
- What was known about inclusion across the city; and
- Priority Inclusion Strategy activity for 2023-24.

The Director of Education offered to share a link to the Inclusion Strategy toolkit with Members of the Committee.

A Member welcomed the positive report and that so many schools in Manchester were becoming Rights Respecting Schools.

The Chair asked what was being done in relation to schools which had higher levels of exclusions than others. The Director of Education reported that exclusion and suspension data was monitored and, if a school was an outlier, they would be invited to a Support and Challenge meeting to understand the reasons for the higher number of exclusions and identify a way to work with the school to improve that.

Decision

To note the report.

CYP/23/39

Overview Report

A report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit was submitted. The overview report contained key decisions within the Committee's remit, responses to previous recommendations and the Committee's work programme, which the Committee was asked to approve.

The Chair encouraged more Members to join the Ofsted Subgroup. She informed Members about the forthcoming visit to Wetherby Young Offenders Institution and stated that the Committee would receive a report on Youth Justice at a future meeting. In response to a Member's comments about an incident of anti-social behaviour by young people in the city centre and what was being done to prevent this from happening again, the Chair stated that she would discuss with the Chair of the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee which Committee should consider this issue.

Decision

To note the report and agree the work programme, subject to the above comments.

Health Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2023

Present:

Councillor Green – in the Chair

Councillors Bayunu, Cooley, Curley, Hilal, Karney, Muse and Reeves

Apologies: Councillors Riasat and Wilson

Also present:

Councillor T. Robinson, Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care

Councillor Chambers, Deputy Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care

Professor Cheryl Lenney OBE, Chief Nurse, Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust

Dr Sarah Vause, Consultant in Fetal and Maternal Medicine and Medical Director of Saint Mary's Managed Clinical Service

Esme Booth, Head of Midwifery, North Manchester, Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust

Celine Doyle, Mental Health Lead, Burnage Academy for Boys

HSC/23/31 Minutes

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2023.

HSC/23/32 Implementing Ockenden: One Year On

The Committee considered the report of the Saint Mary's Managed Clinical Service, Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust that described that Dame Donna Ockenden had been appointed to conduct an independent review of maternity services at Shrewsbury and Telford NHS Trust. A report highlighting the initial findings was published in December 2020, with the second and final report being published in March 2022.

A report detailing Saint Mary's Managed Clinical Service progress against delivering the immediate and essential actions to both reports was presented at the Health Scrutiny Committee on 22 June 2022. This report provides a further update on our progress against the remaining actions.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Discussion of the Manchester Foundation Trust response to emerging findings from the first Ockenden report;
- Discussion of the Manchester Foundation Trust response to findings from the final Ockenden report;

- Information on the support for the maternal health of women and families from Black African, Asian and other ethnic minority groups;
- Information on the response to the Care Quality Commission s29A warning letter, noting that a s29A warning notice stated the reasons why the CQC considered that a trust needed to make significant improvements; and
- Progress on success measures.

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

- Welcoming the use of appropriate language and terminology throughout the report;
- What research, if any had been undertaken to understand the psychological impact the findings of the Ockenden Report and the increased awareness of the issues identified had on women and families from Black African, Asian and other ethnic minority groups;
- Noting that written information booklets were provided in 11 languages, what provision was made for speakers of other languages;
- What provision was made to provide maternity services for refugee women and disabled women;
- Noting comments regarding staff recruitment and retention;
- What were the barriers to implementing the recommendation that 'The transitional care model offered at the Wythenshawe site should be replicated across the three sites without delay'; and
- Noting the reported work analysing a large data set of birth outcomes that found differences in the rates of fetal growth restriction in certain geographical areas with high ethnic diversity and enquiring what were the geographical areas.

The Head of Midwifery, North Manchester, Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust made reference to the Maternity Voice Partnership that had been established across all three hospital sites. She advised this forum captured and articulated the voice of service users. She stated this feedback from women and their families, including those from different ethnicities was important to inform services and responses. She stated that she was not aware of any specific research into the psychological impact the findings of the Ockenden and increased awareness of the issues identified had on women and families from Black African, Asian and other ethnic minority groups. In response to a specific question the Committee was advised that further information on the 12 Black and Asian maternity equity standards that was referred to in the report would be circulated following the meeting for information.

The Consultant in Fetal and Maternal Medicine and Medical Director of Saint Mary's Managed Clinical Service made reference to the initiatives to engage and support women and families from Black African, Asian and other ethnic minority groups, noting that consideration was also given to wider health inequalities, such as socio and economic deprivation. She made reference to the advice work undertaken across a range of health-related topics such as Vitamin D and vaccinations. She commented that this engagement with women helped understand the needs, concerns and risks experienced by women. She also stated that raising awareness of health inequalities amongst staff was also important to support this activity and address health inequalities. She further made reference to the intention to increase

the number of staff across the workforce that reflected the women that were cared for.

The Consultant in Fetal and Maternal Medicine and Medical Director of Saint Mary's Managed Clinical Service commented that it was important to recruit and train the staff so they were equipped with the required skillset to safely complete the transition of the care model offered at the Wythenshawe site across the other sites.

The Chief Nurse, Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust stated that translation services, either face to face or via telephone was utilised for speakers of other languages. She added that they would not use a family member as a translator. She said that if it became evident that there was a need to publish a booklet in another language this could be arranged. The Head of Midwifery, North Manchester, Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust advised that there were specialist staff who worked with asylum seekers, adding that these staff had established community links and worked closely with the VCSE sector. She stated that a Specialist Midwifery Advocate would support a disabled person and devise specialist individual care plans, including those in the home setting.

The Consultant in Fetal and Maternal Medicine and Medical Director of Saint Mary's Managed Clinical Service advised that the geographical areas referred to in the research into the rates of fetal growth restriction were Longsight, Levenshulme and Fallowfield. She added that this research would inform targeted intervention work to improve health outcomes. The Chair stated any future update reports should include this, and any other relevant data sets, and where possible this should be provided at a ward level.

Decision

To note the report.

HSC/23/33 Adverse Childhood Experiences & Trauma Informed Practice

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Director of Public Health that provided an update to a report considered at the meeting of the committee on 7 September 2022 on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Trauma Informed Practice.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an update on the work done to strengthen the ACEs programme objectives, through extensive engagement and consultation with stakeholders to ensure that the programme was fit for purpose following the impact of COVID-19 and within the context of Making Manchester Fairer;
- Providing an update on the ACEs and Trauma programme of work across the city including a good practice example of culture change from Manchester Housing Services and a collaboration between Z-Arts and the Burnage Academy for Boys; and
- Next steps.

The Committee then heard from Celine Doyle, Mental Health Lead, Burnage Academy for Boys. She described the art project that had been delivered at the school that engaged with 13 boys who had experienced displacement from their country of birth. She spoke of the positive outcomes that the boys experienced via the project and the legacy this had provided for the school. The Committee welcomed this testimony and the positive contribution this had made to the young people. The Programme Lead described this was one of the four schools and four creative providers using a trauma informed lens.

The Committee further welcomed the case study that related to the work of Housing Services. The Head of Neighbourhood Services stated that Housing Services were a key partner in North Manchester and Trauma Informed Practice was embedded in their approach, adding that this was the only approach that worked. The Chair acknowledged this powerful statement.

The Committee then received a written statement from Councillor Doswell, Lead Member for Trauma Informed that had been submitted. In her statement Councillor Doswell spoke of her own experience of Adverse Childhood Experiences, praising the staff involved with this work and endorsing the report to the Committee. The Chair thanked Councillor Doswell for her continued commitment to this area of work.

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

- Was the work described shared and implemented by other housing providers and other key partners, such as the police;
- Welcoming the positive contribution this work had delivered for the city, recognising that this approach and understanding would continue to be rolled out across different sectors and partners; and
- The need to ensure this work was embedded across services for all generations, not just young people.

The Head of Neighbourhood Services advised that there was a desire from different housing providers to deliver and adopt this work, recognising that some were at different stages in this work. She said that there was a Housing Group who met regularly, and this area of work was discussed and provided a forum to share good practice. Celine Doyle, Mental Health Lead, Burnage Academy for Boys commented that there were a lot of schools adopting the Trauma Informed model of practice. She referred to the Trauma Informed Network of Schools that would help build traction across the secondary school sector in Manchester. She added that an evaluation of this work and the outcomes of this would be undertaken.

The Deputy Director of Public Health informed the Committee that an element of the Making Manchester Fairer Work Force Development Group considered how Trauma Informed Practice would be embedded across all services, including all age groups. She further commented that one of the themes of the Making Manchester Fairer Plan was to consider Community power and social connections and she recognised that the Police were a key partner in this work and conversations would include how they could adopt Trauma Informed Practice.

The Programme Lead stated that consideration was always been given as to how this work could be expanded, noting that since September 2022 over 1,000 individuals have attended a training session. This included elected members, staff from the Manchester Jewish Museum, the Afro-Caribbean Alliance, MCC Homelessness Directorate, Manchester Sensory Support Service, Department for Work and Pensions, a number of schools, Greater Manchester Police, Primary Care, housing providers and a range of voluntary sector organisations. With specific reference to work with the police he described the training delivered to officers working within the Violence Reduction Unit and to PCSOs. He acknowledged that more needed to be done, especially with the training of new recruits to the police service. The Chair made reference to her experience of the police who had undertaken this training and the positive difference this had made in how they interacted with young people and their families.

The Programme Lead commented that he welcomed the continued support of the Committee for this area of work and he acknowledged the observations from the Members in regard to other sectors that would benefit from this approach and training, including Care Homes.

The Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care commented that he respected and endorsed the ambitions as described within the report. He added that the refreshed ACEs and Trauma Responsive Programme needed to include discussion and consideration of the significant impact the pandemic had on citizens of all ages, adding that the impact of the pandemic and associated trauma would be realised for many years to come.

Decision

To note the report.

HSC/23/34 Draft Terms of Reference and Work Programme for the Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust: Improvement Plan Task and Finish Group

The Committee considered the report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit that presented the draft terms of reference and work programme for the proposed Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust: Improvement Plan Task and Finish Group.

The Committee were invited to agree the membership of the Task and Finish Group, the terms of reference and work programme.

The Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care stated that he would attend each meeting of the Group to provide any verbal updates that were relevant to the Group.

Decision

The Committee;

1. Appoint Councillors Bayunu, Curley, Green and Wilson as members of the Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust: Improvement Plan Task and Finish Group.
2. Approve the terms of reference of the Task and Finish Group.
3. Approve the work programme of the Task and Finish Group, noting the comments above.

HSC/23/35 Overview Report

The report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit which contained key decisions within the Committee's remit and responses to previous recommendations was submitted for comment. Members were also invited to agree the Committee's future work programme.

Decision

The Committee notes the report and agrees the work programme.

Health Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 6 September 2023

Present:

Councillor Green – in the Chair

Councillors Bayunu, Cooley, Curley, Hilal, Karney, Muse, Reeves and Wilson

Apologies: Councillor Riasat

Also present:

Councillor T. Robinson, Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care

Councillor Chambers, Deputy Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care

Julie Taylor, Locality Director of Strategy/Provider Collaboration (MICP)

Sophie Hargreaves, Director of Strategy, Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust

Tom Hinchcliffe, Deputy Place-based Lead, NHS GM (Manchester)

Professor Matt Makin, Medical Director at North Manchester General Hospital, Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust

Darren Banks, Group Director of Strategy, Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust

Mark Edwards, Chief Operating Officer, Manchester Local Care Organisation

HSC/23/36 Minutes

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2023.

HSC/23/37 Pennine Acute Disaggregation Update

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Strategy, MFT and Locality Director of Strategy/Provider Collaboration that provided an update regarding the dissolution of the former Pennine Acute Hospitals Trust (PAHT) and re-provision of services by both Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust (MFT) and the Northern Care Alliance (NCA). The report advised that this was the third phase of change proposals arising from the dissolution of PAHT.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing a background to the acquisition of the Pennine Acute Hospitals Trust;
- An overview of the disaggregation approach and context of complex services;
- A summary of proposals to disaggregate the third phase of complex services namely Dexa (bone density) scanning, Ear, Nose & Throat (ENT), Urology and Trauma & Orthopaedics; and
- A summary of the assessment of the impact of these proposed changes on North Manchester residents in terms of quality, equality, patient choice, travel and access.

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

- Recognising the significant work that had been undertaken to progress this work;
- Recognising and welcoming the patient centred approach;
- Noting the importance of car parking for both patients and staff and in doing so welcoming the development of the multistorey car park facility at the North Manchester General Hospital site;
- Recognising that the work described in the report was part of the wider economic regeneration of north Manchester; and
- Would there be ongoing monitoring of the impacts on patient experience following implementation of the changes described.

The Locality Director of Strategy/Provider Collaboration (MICP) described that there had been significant work undertaken via the public engagement exercise on the issue of patient travel, including consideration of the cost associated with travel and a summary of these findings had been presented in the report. She described that information on travel options would now be routinely included in appointment letters that would be sent to patients. The Director of Strategy, MFT added that the public engagement events had identified that a lot of patients did not know what their options were in relation to public transport. Regarding the multistorey car park to be delivered at North Manchester General Hospital it was noted that this would alleviate issues associated with on-street parking experienced by local residents.

The Director of Strategy, MFT informed the Members that each phase of the disaggregation process that had been reported to the Committee would be monitored. The Chair commented that the Committee would be interested to learn of these findings once collated.

The Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care said that he welcomed the report. He commented that he was very appreciative of the ongoing dialogue between the Trust and the Council from the early stages of planning of this programme of work.

Decisions

The Committee;

1. Endorse the progress Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust and Northern Care Alliance have made to disaggregate services from the legacy Pennine Acute Hospitals Trust footprint; and
2. Endorse the assessment made by the working group that the changes identified in phase 3 do not constitute a 'substantial variation'.

HSC/23/38 Integrated Care Systems

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Place Based Lead, Manchester Integrated Care Partnership that provided an update following the UK Government's reforms to health and social care, which established Integrated Care Systems on 1 July 2022, including Greater Manchester Integrated Care System (NHS GM). The

report also provided an update on the governance arrangements that had developed over the last year for NHS GM and the Manchester locality.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Information on the NHS Greater Manchester (NHS GM) Integrated Care System (ICS); and
- An update on the Manchester Locality Plan.

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

- Noting that Manchester had been pioneering in terms of health devolution and the integration of health and social care;
- Recognising the risk to delivering all the ambitions for Manchester whilst delivering the inherited required efficiencies of £606.2m;
- All available levers and opportunities should be used to raise awareness of these required efficiencies, including the lobbying of local MPs and the Shadow Secretary of State for Health and Social Care;
- Noting and welcoming the completion of the Environmental Impact Assessment and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion sections of the report template;
- Further information was requested on the GM NHS Green Plan in 2023/24;
- What was the approach to ensure people and communities were active partners as described as an aim of the Our Healthier Manchester Locality Plan; and
- Discussing the relationship between housing and health.

The Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care stated that he had great concerns regarding the ability to deliver the ambitions for Manchester and to improve the health outcomes of Manchester residents whilst delivering the inherited required efficiencies of £606.2m. He stated that with the support of the Committee, and in conjunction with the Chair, he would write to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to lobby for adequate funding for Manchester ahead of the Autumn Budget Statement. The Committee fully endorsed this suggestion and noted that the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care should be invited to meet in person with the Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care when he would be visiting Manchester attending the party conference.

In response to Members' comments regarding planning for managing and understanding the impact of the required efficiencies of £606.2m, the Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care stated that this issue was considered and monitored at monthly meetings that involved all partners. He reiterated that he remained deeply concerned about this inherited financial situation, however he was committed to doing all he could to protect the most vulnerable residents in the city and use all available funding to achieve the best health outcomes for Mancunians.

The Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care commented that appropriate and quality housing was recognised as a factor in residents' health outcomes. He made reference to the many initiatives that had been delivered in Manchester that had been reported to the Committee over previous meetings,

including Dementia Friendly Housing schemes and Extra Care Schemes. He further addressed the question asked in relation to active partners by advising that the Director of Equality and Engagement had involved the Patient Advisory Groups in the detailed delivery planning. In addition, all existing community networks and sounding boards were involved in this work, adding that this approach was reflected across Greater Manchester.

In response to the request for further information on the GM NHS Green Plan in 2023/24, the Deputy Place-based Lead, NHS GM (Manchester) advised that information would be provided following the meeting. He further clarified that the Director of Equality and Engagement was Sharmila Kar.

The Chair in concluding this item of business requested that any future update reports on Integrated Care Systems to the Committee include information on how the new arrangements impacted Manchester residents and provide case studies and examples of outcomes.

Decision

The Committee recommend that the Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care, in conjunction with the Chair, write to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to lobby for adequate funding for Manchester ahead of the Autumn Budget Statement.

HSC/23/39 COVID-19 National Inquiry

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Public Health that provided information about the UK Covid 19 Inquiry, how the Council had contributed to the Inquiry so far and described the arrangements in place for responding to future requests.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background in terms of the national context;
- Describing the structure of the Inquiry; and
- Information of the local response to date, including information on the role and membership of the UK Covid-19 Inquiry: MCC Internal working Group Membership.

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

- That an accurate account of the Manchester experience should be written to act as an accurate testimony;
- Paying tribute to all Mancunians who responded heroically during the pandemic, paying particular tribute to the many volunteers across the vaccination sites; and
- Noting that each and every Mancunian had a personal story to tell about their experience of the pandemic.

In response to a specific question regarding the UK Covid-19 Inquiry: MCC Internal working Group membership, the Director of Public Health advised that this was an

officer led group, using existing officer networks who would coordinate each respective directorate's response and submission to the inquiry.

The Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care echoed the views of the Members in paying tribute to the heroic Mancunian response to the pandemic. In addition, he paid tribute to the Director of Public Health and his team and to the Executive Director of Executive Director of Adult Social Services. He said that Manchester, in the absence of national policy, had taken the lead in regard to instigating testing patients for Covid before they were discharged from hospital into other care settings.

In concluding this item of business, the Chair stated that she was incredibly proud of Manchester and our residents for their response during the pandemic.

Decision

To note the report.

HSC/23/40 Planning for Winter 2023/24 Across Health and Care

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Place Based Lead, the Executive Director Adult Social Services and the Director of Public Health that provided an overview of the key elements of the approach to winter planning 2023/24 alongside organisational updates relating to what would be delivered by partner organisations.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Noting that a full system winter plan would be developed through the two urgent care system boards – Manchester and Trafford Operational Delivery Group (ODG) and Urgent Care Board (UCB);
- A first iteration of the system plan would be shared at the September Urgent Care Board, with a further update in October, and then as required throughout winter;
- Information regarding the operational resilience across the NHS;
- Information regarding the Urgent and Emergency Care System Plan;
- Information regarding the Operational Pressures Escalation Levels (OPEL) Framework;
- An update on the planned Winter Communications Plan; and
- Organisational winter deliverables, by organisation.

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

- Noting the pressures the NHS was already experiencing prior to additional winter pressures;
- Noting the pressures and resulting waiting times at Accident and Emergency (A&E) departments;
- Noting the additional impact of Covid over the winter period;
- Advice and information needed to be cascaded to residents regarding the importance of accessing health services when they were ill; and

- Clarification was sought on the reported need for sufficient call handling capacity within the North West Ambulance Service (NWAS) and did this indicate that it was currently under resourced.

The Group Director of Strategy, Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust stated that the report presented to Committee provided a summary of the planning work underway and advised that significant detailed work and analysis informed the planning. He commented that there were a range of initiatives to reduce pressures experienced at A&E departments, including the use of Virtual Wards that could be used to clinically care for and manage patients, and safely step up or step down care as appropriate. He stated that this could improve patient flow at A&E. He added that demand at A&E acted as a useful barometer for how the wider system was functioning. He stated that all available knowledge, intelligence and experience informed the planning for winter pressures.

The Chief Operating Officer, Manchester Local Care Organisation advised that currently, a third of the 320 virtual community beds target to be delivered by the end of March 2024 had been achieved, adding this was in line with current projections. He commented that there was clinical evidence to demonstrate that this approach to care was appropriate for certain cohorts and conditions. He added that this approach also included participation from GPs.

The Director of Public Health responded to the comment raised regarding the need for resident advice and information. He made reference to the Winter Communications Plan that was described in the report, adding that this would be bespoke to Manchester and would include Cost of Living advice and vaccination information. He stated that information would be published in an easy to read format and available in different languages.

The Director of Public Health advised the Committee that following publication of the report the date for care home residents and staff for flu and Covid vaccinations had been brought forward from October to commence the 11 September and the 18 September for all other eligible cohorts. He added that this decision had been taken in response to the new variant of concern that had been identified, variant BA.2.86, also known as Pirola. He advised that all existing trusted networks would be used to articulate and promote vaccination information and advice.

In response to the discussion regarding call handler capacity within NWAS, the Deputy Place-based Lead, NHS GM (Manchester) advised that the reference in the report referred to the need to ensure that capacity within this service was adequate to respond to the winter pressures.

The Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care commented that there was an established and strong dialogue across all health and social care partners in the city to enable the planning for winter. He advised that the Winter Plan would be reviewed monthly by the Manchester Partnership Board and all Councillors would be kept updated by himself. He noted that the Committee would be considering a report at the February 2024 meeting that reflected on how effective the winter planning had been.

Decision

To note the report.

HSC/23/41 Overview Report

The report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit which contained key decisions within the Committee's remit and responses to previous recommendations was submitted for comment. Members were also invited to agree the Committee's future work programme.

In response to a comment from a Member regarding the Care Quality Commission rating of 'Requires Improvement' for Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust, the Chair stated that she would give consideration as to how the Committee could be informed of the Trust's response to these findings.

Decision

The Committee notes the report and agrees the work programme.

Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 20 July 2023

Present:

Councillor Simcock (Chair) – in the Chair

Councillors Brickell, Connolly, Davies, Kilpatrick, Lanchbury and Wheeler

Also present:

Councillor Rahman, Statutory Deputy Leader

Councillor Akbar, Executive Member for Finance and Resources

Apologies: Councillors Andrews and Evans

RGSC/23/35 Interests

Councillors Connolly and Wheeler declared a personal interest in items 8 and 12 - MCC Housing Services & Equans contract extension – and would remain in the meeting for the duration of discussions.

RGSC/23/36 Minutes

Members received and considered the minutes of the previous meeting. It was requested that the minutes be amended under minute number RGSC/23/31 to include a statement made by the Executive Member for Finance and Resources that the Council should see progress in the use of insourcing as a delivery model within 3 years.

Decision:

That the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 22 June 2023, be approved as a correct record subject to the amendment as detailed above.

RGSC/23/37 Review of Development Agreements

The committee considered a report of the Director of Strategic Housing and Development and the Head of Development and Investment Estate which outlined the Council's use of development agreements along with the governance arrangements in relation to the negotiation, management and monitoring of development and associated agreements over Council land and buildings.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Non-standardisation of approach within agreements in place;

- The Council's formal corporate Joint Venture arrangements;
- Overage and performance-related profit, with PwC commissioned to undertake a peer review of overage arrangements;
- How due diligence was undertaken, including the use of a checklist and form for developing Joint Ventures and agreements; and
- The best practice principles of overage.

Key points and queries that arose from the committee's discussions included:

- What was meant by 'reputational factors', and whether the Council would reject a tender on these grounds;
- How reputational factors would be taken into consideration in regard to Joint Ventures;
- Noting the peer review of overage arrangements being undertaken by PwC, and querying who the Council's peers were;
- Whether ethical considerations were taken into account when awarding contracts; and
- Whether Joint Ventures were subject to procurement regulations and non-commercial matters.

The Head of Development and Investment Estate explained that the Development team worked closely with colleagues across the Council through the Best Value Working Group and the due diligence process to review, enhance and bolster governance arrangements within Development. He also stated that a dashboard in relation to development agreements and overages would be included within the Annual Property Report, which was listed on the Committee's work programme for a future meeting.

In response to queries around what was meant by 'reputational factors', the Head of Development and Investment Estate stated that this referred to the ability and track record of a company and how they consulted and worked with local communities.

The Director of Development stated that Manchester was an investable city, with significant interest in opportunities to collaborate with the Council. He explained that there were a series of measures and de-risking opportunities to ensure the Council works with the right partners who could deliver on economic outputs, such as new homes, new skills and investment.

The Head of Development and Investment Estate reiterated the Council's focus on outputs within development agreements and explained that delivery milestones were contained within each contractual framework. Checks and balances were also undertaken to examine the nature of an organisation, their corporate structure and their income streams through a procurement exercise, development agreement or land transaction. A framework had been developed in collaboration with Corporate Governance to ensure assurance prior to entering into an agreement with a tender.

The Head of Development and Investment Estate explained that PwC were a multi-disciplinary organisation with significant experience in management, contracts and finance. He stated that PwC had experience in working with a number of local authorities and organisations and were skilled in the area of the review. The review included undertaking a forensic review of some of the development agreements which the Council already had in place and would report back to the Council.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer stated that the Council placed great importance on due diligence when considering Joint Ventures. This included best consideration for land procurement or transactions and ensuring that this was transparent.

In response to a member's query regarding ethical considerations, the Executive Member for Finance and Resources highlighted that there was not a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to awarding contracts. He stated that each Joint Venture would be awarded on their own merit and that any future risk would be mitigated against.

The City Solicitor reiterated that each Joint Venture would be awarded on individual merit. There were a variety of factors which could be taken into account when considering a Joint Venture and this could include some political and ethical factors, although these could not be explicitly listed.

Decision:

That the report be noted.

RGSC/23/38 Our Town Hall Project – Progress Update

The committee considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer which provided an update on the progress of the refurbishment and partial restoration of the Town Hall and Albert Square under the Our Town Hall (OTH) project.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background to the OTH project;
- Providing an update on the operating model and social value;
- Progress against key performance indicators (KPIs);
- Challenges experienced since the Notice to Proceed (NTP);
- The current financial position, noting that the project team had extensively sought opportunities to reduce cost pressures;
- The programme end date would not be confirmed until January 2024 when the position would be clearer; and
- The project was seeking additional funding of £29m to fund works until the end of December.

Key points and queries that arose from the committee's discussions included:

- What mechanisms were in place to ensure that higher costs were not a profit-making opportunity for contractors and suppliers;
- Whether any of the challenges and discoveries, such as out-of-true lifts, could have been foreseen earlier in the project;
- What the budget position would look like in January 2024;
- Whether officers would still recommend the same level of borrowing for the project, given the current position;
- The time at which officers became aware of delays, and how this was communicated to members and residents;
- Whether there were any financial implications affecting Lend Lease;
- If any cost mitigation measures were in place to reduce the need for additional funding;
- The impact of rising interest rates;
- How the building will be operated and when more information could be provided on this;
- Whether there was any certainty on the completion date for the project; and
- Whether a definitive completion date and final revenue budget would be available at the next update.

In opening the item, the Chair explained that he and some committee members had recently visited the Town Hall, which they found useful and were impressed by the enthusiasm of officers working on the project.

The Statutory Deputy Leader stated that the Council had a duty to preserve the Town Hall for future generations as a symbol of democracy and civic pride and that the House of Commons Restoration Team recently visited the site.

The Project Director stated that this was the largest heritage project in the country and acknowledged that this posed unique challenges.

In response to a query regarding what mechanisms were in place to ensure that higher costs were not a profit-making opportunity for contractors and suppliers, the Project Director stated that this was traditionally undertaken through competitive tension, which ensured a supply chain that was motivated and had capacity to undertake work. He noted, however, that there was a reduced appetite within the supply chain since the Covid-19 pandemic due to perception of risk and staff shortages. Members were advised that a significant number of tenders had withdrawn toward the end of the tender process, which reduced the competitive tension and meant that some contracts had to be awarded to the most expensive tender.

The Project Director explained that problems with lifts were unknown prior to works beginning and required major engineering exercises. He explained that a contingency plan had been developed and broken down by individual packages to

identify the appropriate levels of risk in design, procurement and buying, construction and discovery.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer highlighted that the last report to the committee predicted a budget increase of £17m to address emerging pressures. She stated that there had been a concentrated period of work and officers were near to fully understanding the challenges posed by the building. She reiterated the commitment to keeping members and the public informed on progress.

In response to a query regarding whether officers would still recommend the same level of borrowing for the project, given the current position, the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer stated that the Council created a significant reserve to address the capital financing costs of both Our Town Hall and Factory International. She also explained that prior to the project, two floors in the Town Hall were out of use and there were issues with stonework and heating, and that key considerations had been taken into account.

The Project Director explained that there was a significant contingency of £49m at Notice to Proceed stage and the risks of discovery were recognised. He stated, however, that the Council could not have foreseen the impacts of hyperinflation, market pressures, redesign and delay claims. He advised that the project team had been working hard since Notice to Proceed (NTP) to mitigate overrun costs and programme.

With regards to a query around the financial implications affecting Lend Lease, members were advised that the Council's contract with Lend Lease governed how they would be rewarded and how they must perform. It was stated that the Council was currently in receipt of delay claims amounting to £25m and some of these claims had been submitted by Lend Lease. These would be assessed and would be awarded if found to meet the contractual terms.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer also expressed the Council's commitment for the Town Hall to be open and accessible to residents and the wider public, highlighting the Visitor Centre that would form part of the building. She stated that work was underway to develop a large Civic Quarter and further information would be provided as part of the budget process for 2024/25. Members were also advised that officers were examining the costs of running the estate to ensure sustainability in the future.

The Project Director explained that the biggest risk currently facing the project was further delay. He stated that there was still £10m-worth of works packages to procure, which would remove inflationary risk to procurement by the end of 2023. There remained risks around discovery and having to reorder materials at higher prices.

In response to a question on interest rates, it was explained that high interest rates had implications for the Council's borrowing costs but it was stated that the Council did not borrow for individual projects but to meet the overall capital cash flow requirements. Significant work had been undertaken to examine the impact of this for future capital programmes but the financing reserve for the Our Town Hall project to meet financing charges was sufficient to cover interest rate increases and to not increase pressure on the revenue budget.

The Chair expressed his hope that there would be a definitive cost and completion date for the project at the next update to the committee in early 2024, to which the Project Director explained that the hiatus of risk would have passed by then which could provide a clearer position.

Decision:

That the committee

1. notes the progress made, and
2. endorses the recommendation to the Executive.

**RGSC/23/39 MCC Housing Services and Equans Contract Extension
(PART A)**

The committee considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer and the Director of Housing Services, which sought the committee's endorsement to extend the Council's contract with Equans to provide housing repairs and maintenance services to the Council's housing stock for a further 3 years.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- An overview of and background to the Council's contract with Equans;
- The fundamental deliverables of the contract;
- Performance of the contract, with most performance indicators being met across repairs and compliance;
- The delivery model assessment being undertaken for future delivery, assessing whether to continue to outsource in the longer-term or to bring the service in-house; and
- The role of the Housing Advisory Board.

The Executive Member for Housing and Development explained that the contract applied to the Council's housing stock in the city centre and North Manchester and that this was a vital service which affected thousands of residents. He stated that the proposal was to extend the current contract for three years from April 2024, with an additional break clause each year to allow the Council to assess alternative delivery models, such as insourcing, and to ensure best value and quality of service.

In response to a comment by a member that the Housing Advisory Board had not yet met to discuss the proposal, the Executive Member clarified that the Board had been established for over a year and met every 2 months. He noted that the Board would meet that evening to discuss the proposal and that there had been preliminary discussions already.

Members noted that a Part B report on the proposal was listed further on the agenda and would reserve their comments for discussion under that item.

Decision:

That the Part A report be noted.

RGSC/23/40 Overview Report

The committee received a report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit which provided details of key decisions that fell within the Committee's remit and items for information previously requested by the Committee. The report also included the Committee's work programme, which the Committee was asked to amend as appropriate and agree.

Decision:

That the report be noted and the work programme agreed.

RGSC/23/41 Factory International Progress Update (PART A)

The committee considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer and the Strategic Director (Development) which provided an update on the delivery of Aviva Studios including progress with the construction programme; the evolution of Factory International; the success of the recent MIF23 festival; and the conclusion of the naming rights agreement with Aviva for Aviva Studios.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Providing an introduction to the project;
- The benefits already being felt by the works;
- The social value provided by The Factory Academy and Factory Futures;
- The social value created through the construction works;
- Progress and key performance indicators;
- The position of the project at July 2023;
- The fundraising strategy;
- That the naming rights had been awarded to Aviva and would be called Aviva Studios; and
- Contractual arrangements.

Key points and queries that arose from the committee's discussions included:

- Why the most recent report to the Committee in October 2022 was not listed within the background documents;
- Reiterating a previous request that any future requests for increased funding include a breakdown of all funding increases over the project's lifespan;
- Whether any costs were charged to architects as a result of design challenges;
- If delays due to water damage caused by inclement weather could have been avoided;
- Noting the importance of engaging with local businesses, particularly small enterprises, and querying how this would be undertaken; and
- Welcoming the community and social value work.

The Statutory Deputy Leader introduced the item and stated that the delivery of Aviva Studios had brought in more than £106m of new money into Manchester and would result in an additional £1.1bn in the economy over a period of time. It would also create over 1500 jobs and would serve as a catalyst for investment into the cultural sector. He highlighted that Lonely Planet had named Manchester one of the top 30 destinations to visit and Time Out named The Factory as one of the best things to visit in 2023. He stated that positive feedback had been received from residents and the cultural sector.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer apologised for the most recent report not being included in the list of background documents and explained that this had been done in error. She also committed to providing a full history of the funding increase within the final account at a future meeting, to which members requested this be provided sooner.

In response to a query regarding design challenges, the Director of Capital Programmes explained that two design architect firms had been commissioned to ensure the acoustic capacity and fire safety of the building. He stated that the cost of this had been borne by the Council and that this was necessary to ensure the integrity of the building.

The Director of Capital Programmes explained that inclement weather also described the cold snap experienced at the beginning of the year, which led to water damage as a result of condensation. He stated that discussions were ongoing regarding the management of works as part of the commercial considerations.

The Director of City Centre Growth and Infrastructure provided assurances that the development would have a positive impact on local businesses and the Council would engage with these as Aviva Studios became embedded within the city. She also highlighted that twelve food and beverage venues were planned for St John's to support the area.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer also wished to place on record the Council's excitement to work and partner with Aviva on this project.

Decision:

That the committee

1. notes the report, and
2. endorses the recommendations being made to the Executive.

RGSC/23/42 Exclusion of Press and Public

Decision:

That the press and public be excluded during consideration of the following item which involved consideration of exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of particular persons and public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

RGSC/23/43 Factory International Progress Update (PART B)

The committee considered a confidential report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer and the Strategic Director (Development), which update on the fundraising for the construction project and the conclusion of the naming rights agreement with Aviva for Aviva Studios, supplementary to item 5.

The committee discussed and queried a number of issues and points within the report.

Decision:

That the committee

1. notes the report, and
2. endorses the recommendations being made to the Executive.

RGSC/23/44 MCC Housing Services and Equans Contract Extension (PART B)

The committee considered a confidential report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer and the Director of Housing Services, which detailed the key considerations accounted for in recommending extending the contract for housing repairs and maintenance for up to three years.

The committee discussed and queried a number of issues and points within the report.

Decision:

That the committee does not endorse the recommendation to extend the MCC Housing Services contract with Equans up to a maximum of three years.

Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 24 August 2023

Present:

Councillor Simcock (Chair) – in the Chair

Councillors Andrews, Connolly, Evans, Kilpatrick, Lanchbury and Wheeler

Also present:

Councillor White, Executive Member for Housing and Development

Councillor Karney

Councillor Leech

Apologies: Councillors Brickell and Davies

RGSC/23/45 Interests

Councillors Connolly and Wheeler declared a personal interest in items 4 - Call in of decision: MCC Housing Services – Equans Extension – and would remain in the meeting for the duration of discussions.

RGSC/23/46 Call in of decision: MCC Housing Services – Equans Extension

The committee considered a Key Decision that had been called in by five members of the Council to ascertain whether this complied with the Council's decision-making process. If the Committee believed that this had not been complied with, it could then refer the matter back to the decision-maker for reconsideration.

On behalf of those who had signed the request, Councillor John Leech was invited by the Chair to explain the reasons for calling in the decision made by the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer to extend the current Equans Housing Services Contract for the provision of the housing operations repairs and maintenance service for up to 3 years from April 2024 to April 2027.

Councillor Leech explained that he proposed the call-in of this decision due to concerns around value for money, and whether the decision constituted the best option for tenants, the workforce and the Council; the use of subcontractors and agency staff by Equans; and concerns raised by Unite the Union regarding health and safety, changes to the sickness absence policy, a failure to address accusations of bullying and harassment towards their members and a lack of trust in management. He also highlighted how the Council was still addressing historic challenges from the transfer of the Northwards housing stock to the Council's management.

Councillor Leech stated that the report failed to provide any evidence to support the outcome of the feasibility study, which suggested that extending the current contract with Equans provided best value for money. He also queried whether alternative options had been fully considered.

In line with Council procedures, the Committee were invited to ask questions of Councillor Leech. In response to a query from the Chair regarding how Councillor Leech thought the decision-making process had been deficient, he reiterated that there was a lack of justification as to why alternative options for the contract had been dismissed. Councillor Leech also stated that he believed it would be difficult for the committee to endorse the decision without information on the alternative options considered, although he acknowledged the time sensitivity around the contract extension.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer and the Director of Housing Services were in attendance to answer questions of the Committee.

As the decision-maker, the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer explained that Key Decision Notice was published following consultation with the Housing Advisory Board, Major Contracts Oversight Board and the Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee. She stated that the Council was still in the process of embedding the former Northwards housing stock into the Council's oversight and this limited capacity to undertake another major insourcing project.

She addressed some of Councillor Leech's concerns and explained that the Council had and would continue to consider alternative options for the housing repairs and maintenance contract. She stated that value for money could be demonstrated through feedback from tenants and advised that the Head of Internal Audit had been requested to undertake a quality assurance exercise on the key performance indicators (KPIs) for the contract.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer also stated that the Council took the concerns raised by Unite the Union seriously but reiterated that resolving HR issues was the responsibility of Equans.

Members sought clarification from the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer on the alternative options for the contract and the timescales around employing a break clause in the contract in the first year of its extension. The committee was advised, in response, that it would be ambitious to exercise a break clause within the first year and that the Council would need to be mindful of the volume of work that this would impact. She reiterated that work was underway to understand future opportunities for the contract.

In response to other queries, it was confirmed that work to scope the Internal Audit review of KPIs was underway and confirmation would be given at a later date as to when the outcome of this review would be reported to the Audit Committee. It was

also confirmed that the Major Contracts Oversight Board considered reputational issues when considering any contract.

The Director of Housing Services informed the Committee that there was an overall satisfaction rate of 82% amongst tenants in June 2023 and that there were now more directly employed staff members on the contract with hopes of increasing the number of apprentices employed. He also recognised the benefit of expert knowledge afforded by employing subcontractors and agency staff. The Committee was also advised that specific issues would be taken seriously and raised directly with Equans management team once made aware.

In response to a member's query around those tenants that did not respond to the satisfaction survey, the Director of Housing Services explained that work was being undertaken to build stronger connections with tenants and acknowledged that the survey was a representative sample with more work needed to guarantee a higher response rate.

The Director of Housing Services also provided assurances that he would continue to engage with Unite the Union on the issues raised by their members.

The Executive Member for Housing and Development explained that the delivery of repairs and maintenance within the housing stock was a key priority for the Council and that this was a frequent subject of discussion at the Housing Advisory Board, where tenant representatives were in attendance. He highlighted that it was a political decision to pursue insourcing where appropriate and reiterated previous comments made that the concerns raised by Unite the Union were taken seriously.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer, the Director of Housing Services and the Executive Member for Housing and Development all expressed their confidence that the correct decision-making processes had been followed.

The Chair called Councillor Pat Karney as a witness in his capacity as the elected member of a ward in which much of the Council's housing stock was located. Councillor Karney reiterated the importance of having a good housing repairs service. He stated that it would be irresponsible to bring this service in-house whilst the Council was still working to embed the old Northwards service and that doing so would have a detrimental impact on residents.

In coming to their decision, members of the Committee noted that 12 months would not be sufficient time to bring the service in-house but welcomed ongoing work to identify ways in which this could be brought forward in future. Members recognised the enormity and complexity of bringing the service in-house and acknowledged the improvements made so far. They welcomed the suggestion of yearly reviews of the contract and insourcing capacity and acknowledged the need to get the contract right and learn lessons.

Decision: (5:1:1)

That the decision taken by the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer on 24 July 2023 to extend the current Equans Housing Services Contract for up to 3 years from April 2024 to April 2027, for the provision of the housing operations repairs and maintenance service, should stand.

Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 7 September 2023

Present:

Councillor Simcock (Chair) – in the Chair

Councillors Brickell, Connolly, Davies, Kilpatrick, Lanchbury and Wheeler

Also present:

Councillor Akbar, Executive Member for Finance and Resources

Representatives of ACORN

Representative of Debt Justice

Apologies: Councillors Andrews, Evans, Kirkpatrick and Rowles

RGSC/23/47 Urgent business

In opening the meeting, the Chair informed the committee that there was one item of urgent business relating to the recent issuing of a Section 114 notice by Birmingham City Council.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer stated that, whilst she could not comment on the individual circumstances, she hoped this announcement would not detract from the challenges and pressures faced by local authorities. The impact of funding reductions and inflation had significantly impacted many authorities and she explained that a Budget Monitoring report would be considered by the Executive later in the month which highlighted an in-year overspend which was largely driven by pressures in the social care sector, for which the Council was looking at mitigation measures.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer assured the committee that Manchester City Council was relatively financially resilient due to previous decisions and was not anticipating having to issue a Section 114 notice.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources commended the current City Treasurer and her predecessor. He stated that successive Conservative governments had underinvested in local government funding, which disproportionately impacted Manchester. He called on the government to review the local government funding formula and to end the use of 1-year funding settlements.

RGSC/23/48 Minutes

Members received and considered the minutes of the previous meeting. A query was raised under minute number RGSC/23/43 regarding whether a report on further financing requests for Aviva Studios would be considered by the committee. The

Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer advised that the Capital Monitoring report would be considered by Executive later in the month and further detail on this was included in the report. A further report would be submitted to Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee once the final account was available.

In response to a query regarding whether some of the points raised during the discussion of Part B items could be included in the minutes, the Deputy City Solicitor stated that he would advise the member on this outside of the meeting.

Decision:

That

1. the minutes of the meeting held on 20 July 2023 be approved as a correct record, and
2. the minutes of the meeting held on 24 August 2023 be approved as a correct record.

RGSC/23/49 Changes to Council Tax Support Scheme from April 2024

The committee considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer which proposed changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme (CTSS) to ensure that the scheme remains fit for purpose in response to cost-of-living challenges and the transition of most working age residents in receipt of welfare benefits onto Universal Credit.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- The proposed CTSS would pay up to 85% of the Council Tax bill, leaving 15% to pay, compared to the current CTSS which paid up to 82.5% of the Council Tax bill leaving 17.5% to pay;
- It was also proposed to extend the CTS backdating period for working-age and pension-age claims from six-months to 12-months;
- The background to council tax and previous CTS schemes in Manchester;
- The options for consideration;
- Consultation would be undertaken with precepting authorities and residents; and
- Key policies and considerations.

Key points and queries that arose from the committee's discussions included:

- Expressing broad support for the proposals;
- How the Council helped those ineligible for CTS; and
- What evidence there was to suggest that most CTS cases did not need backdating for the full six months to award the additional eligible period of CTS.

The Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services explained that the CTSS provided support to residents on low income by reducing the amount of council tax they were required to pay. The proposed changes would apply from April 2024 and a thorough consultation exercise would be undertaken with the outcomes and final proposals reported back to the committee in January 2024.

In response to queries, the Head of Corporate Assessments explained that there were a number of discretionary schemes in place for those residents who were not eligible for the CTSS, such as the Discretionary Council Tax Payments scheme which allowed a greater level of scope for individuals who may require assistance. He stated that the Discretionary Housing Payments scheme could also be used to address other financial pressures, although it was noted that recipients of this scheme must be in receipt of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit. There was also the Welfare Provision scheme and the Household Support Fund 4 and the Council remained open to finding the best response to individual circumstances where possible.

The Head of Corporate Assessments stated that an underlying entitlement to the CTS benefit would be required for the Council to consider backdating. The proposed change would give additional flexibility to provide the maximum amount of support to households who struggled to make a claim for CTS at the point they needed it.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources stated that the cost-of-living crisis remained a serious issue for many residents and the proposed changes to the CTSS would fulfil the Council's commitment to support those residents most in need.

Decision:

That the committee

1. notes the report, and
2. notes that the outcome of the consultation will be reported back to the committee and for approval by the Executive and Full Council in January 2024.

RGSC/23/50

Update from the Revenues and Benefits Unit

The committee considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer which provided an update on the activity of the Revenues and Benefits Unit since March 2023, including final details of recently completed Covid schemes and ongoing cost of living schemes delivered by the service.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Benefits administration, including Council Tax Support and the management of the Welfare Provision Scheme and other discretionary schemes;
- The financial support provided by the Household Support Fund scheme;
- The financial support provided by the Council Tax Support Fund;
- The financial support provided by the Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Funding programme;
- The financial support provided by the Alternative Fuel Payment Alternative Funding scheme;
- Performance in the collection of council tax and how we balance collection, whilst working in an ethical way and supporting those residents on a low income; and
- Performance in the collection of business rates in the 2022/23 financial year and between 1 April and 31 July of the 2023/24 financial year.

Key points and queries that arose from the committee's discussions included:

- Welcoming the report;
- Querying whether any extra and more innovative communications could be used to highlight the support available and to reiterate that contacting the Council would not have a detrimental impact on a resident's case;
- Suggesting that Appendix 4 could be shared with members and advice agencies for distribution in their communities;
- The purpose of passing cases with a debt less than £150 to Enforcement Agents given that these cases are returned without an in-person visit;
- Whether there was a legal requirement to ask residents to pay their entire council tax bill in full if they missed one payment;
- How effective the Council was in receiving council tax debts in cases passed to Enforcement Agents;
- How a holistic approach was undertaken;
- Noting that Enforcement Agents were not used in 1 in 7 cases where a resident was vulnerable and/or qualified for CTSS and querying why this could not be rolled out fully;
- Noting the low take-up level of the Energy Bill Support Scheme Alternative Funding;
- The real cost to residents of using Enforcement Agents; and
- Whether the Council was currently involved in any government pilot schemes.

The Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services explained that the report set out the significant work undertaken by the Revenues and Benefits Unit since the last update to the committee in March 2023 and detailed the continued delivery of core functions and services and the role played in providing critical financial support to residents and businesses through local and government grants and schemes. He stated that the Unit would continue to ensure that any available funding had the best impact for residents and communities.

In response to a question around effective communications, the Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services stated that work was ongoing with colleagues in the Communications team to identify new ways to engage with residents. He advised that a working group had been established to undertake a review of council tax correspondence in response to representations by ACORN. It was also stated that there had been a significant reduction in call waiting times in recent months.

The Head of Corporate Revenues explained that cases with a debt less than £150 to were passed to Enforcement Agents in an attempt to recover the debt without Enforcement Agents needing to visit a property, and this minimised the fee charged to residents. This was an automated process with no cost incurred by the Council. In circumstances where this would not be possible, the case would be returned for the Council to identify alternative methods to recover the debt.

It was further explained that when a payment is missed, the resident would receive a reminder and would only be required to pay their council tax bill for the year in full if this reminder was ignored. It was reiterated that, if a resident contacted the Council to advise that they were unable to pay the missed payment, officers could implement a payment plan to spread the cost over the year. A case would only be passed to Enforcement Agents if non-payment continued and a Liability Order was obtained from the Magistrates Court.

In response to a question regarding the efficacy of using Enforcement Agents to collect money owed, the Head of Corporate Revenues stated that around 14% of cases passed to Enforcement Agents resulted in the recovery of money and he recognised that Manchester was a deprived area compared to areas where Enforcement Agents were likely to collect a higher level of money owed. He stated that these were cases where the ratepayer had not engaged with the Council and where the Council did not have additional information to support their case, or the recovery of money owed and so there was no alternative means to retrieve the debt.

With regards to the holistic approach taken by the Revenues and Benefits Unit, the committee was advised that officers identify the most appropriate method for recovery based on the information they have. The Head of Corporate Revenues explained that the Council's role was to maximise the collection of council tax which required implementing sustainable arrangements. He stated that there were flexibilities to make it easier for residents to pay their council tax, such as providing breathing spaces and improving access to the Discretionary Council Tax Payment scheme.

The Head of Corporate Revenues advised that Enforcement Agents were not used to collect missed payments where the ratepayer is on the maximum level of CTS. These residents would be sent reminders to pay but were not issued with a summons and were not pursued further if payments continued to be missed.

In response to a query regarding the low take-up level of the Energy Bill Support Scheme, the Head of Corporate Assessments stated that Manchester achieved the greatest level of spend through the Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Funding programme than other GM authorities which responded to officers' enquiries. He stated that the Council had done all it could to communicate about and encourage take-up of the schemes. This was a government scheme for which Manchester was responsible for issuing payments to eligible applications received through the government portal. Other local authorities had advised that take-up of the Alternative Fuel Payment Alternative Funding scheme was higher in rural areas.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer emphasised the need for the government to design funding schemes collaboratively with local authorities.

The committee was further advised that Enforcement Agent fees were prescribed by the government and that there were 3 basic charges which included a £75 fee for passing a case to Enforcement Agents to collect through phone calls and letters, a £235 fee for home visits and a £110 fee for the removal of goods from a property, although this was a rare occurrence. The Head of Corporate Revenues endeavoured to provide an addendum to the report to detail these charges further.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer confirmed that the Council was involved in the Greater Manchester 100% of Business Rates pilot scheme, which allowed the Council to retain 99% of business rates growth over the baseline. This pilot scheme had been extended and discussions were underway with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to extend by a further 10 years as part of the Devolution Trailblazer.

The Chair invited representatives from ACORN and Debt Justice to provide representations to the committee. They called on the committee to recommend that the Council ends the use of Enforcement Agents to collect council tax arrears and highlighted issues around mental health, the need for a more approachable method of collection and the importance of better engagement with residents. A representative of ACORN stated that the organisation agreed with the need to collect council tax to fund key services but expressed a need to be mindful of the human cost of using Enforcement Agents.

In response to these representations, officers stated that they could not comment on individual cases included in ACORN's appendix but provided assurances that the Enforcement Agent sector had positively changed in the years since these cases. Members were also advised that Enforcement Agents would not be sent where a payment was two days late nor would a resident be taken to court without being informed. It was also stated that there were few complaints made regarding the conduct of Enforcement Agents and that thorough training was provided for those in the role.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources commended the work and performance of the Revenues and Benefits Unit. He recognised the empathetic approach of officers in helping residents. He thanked the guests for their attendance and contributions. He explained that the use of Enforcement Agents had decreased in past years but that the Council would lose £2.3million if it ended this practice.

Decision:

That the committee

1. notes the report, and
2. requests that officers, in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance and Resources, undertake a feasibility study into ending the use of Enforcement Agents.

RGSC/23/51 Automation and Artificial Intelligence

The committee considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer which established the Council's current position on and plans for automation and artificial intelligence (AI) and defined the different terminologies that often get grouped into this.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- An introduction written by artificial intelligence software, ChatGPT;
- The benefits of automation for the Council;
- Types of automation;
- Opportunities and risks from the ongoing development of AI; and
- Future ambitions for automation and AI and next steps.

Key points and queries that arose from the committee's discussion included:

- Noting the evolving nature of AI and automation;
- The impact of AI and automation on the workforce, and whether staff are consulted on proposed changes;
- Whether there were any real examples of AI being used to drive efficiencies and to streamline processes;
- Requesting that future reports include case studies;
- The need to implement new technologies appropriately so as not to alienate residents;
- How the use of AI and automation would change job roles;
- Whether an ethical approach would be taken to implementation of AI;
- Issues around intellectual property rights;
- Recommending that this be a standing item for discussion at Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) meetings; and

- Noting that Google Meet allowed AI personas to attend virtual meetings, and querying whether this would be rolled out within the Council.

In introducing the item, the Director of ICT recognised the growing profile of AI and automation within the news and explained that the Council had been using some established automation software for a substantial period of time.

In response to members' questions, the Director of ICT concurred that AI and automation was a fast-moving issue. Members were interested to note that some job applications received by the Council appeared to be written by AI and new technologies were being developed to identify what had been created through AI. Briefing sessions on new technologies would be arranged for members later in the year.

The Director of ICT acknowledged the importance of engaging with the workforce and unions. He noted that engagement had been undertaken previously where new systems or technologies were implemented and that a report had been requested by the JCC on the impacts of AI and automation.

With regards to real examples of AI in use, the committee was informed of two pilots regarding issuing blue badges and reconciliation of earnings which were being designed. A further report on these pilots could be provided to the committee at a later date.

The need to create guidance on how the Council will use AI and automation was highlighted to ensure the right processes and procedures were in place. The impact of AI and automation in changing job roles was acknowledged as more technologies were adopted and would provide greater flexibility for staff to work on other tasks.

In response to a query around intellectual property rights, the Director of ICT explained that legislation and regulations on this were awaited from the government, but the Council would put its own guidance in place.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer highlighted the potential of AI but stated that the Council was still in the early stages of implementing this. She explained that work was underway between ICT, Communications, Legal and Policy to create a stronger framework for the AI and automation agenda and there was a lot of work being undertaken across Greater Manchester, which the Council could draw expertise from.

The Director of ICT informed members that Microsoft Teams would be launching a similar AI persona technology to Google Meet and that the Council would assess where it could be suitable to use this.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources reiterated how this technology was fast-moving and stated that the next steps listed in the report were appropriate.

Decision:

That the committee

1. notes the report, and
2. recommends that, through the JCC, the workforce be consulted on any proposed changes or implementation of AI and automation technologies.

RGSC/23/52 Resident and Business Digital Experience Programme (RBDxP) Progress Update

The committee considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer which provided an update on the Resident and Business Digital Experience Programme (RBDxP), the Programme's approach to user engagement and progress made in the procurement of new technology to replace the Council's existing Customer Relationship Management (CRM) System, eForms and integration technology.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background to RBDxP;
- Recent progress made;
- The approach to procurement of a new Digital Platform;
- The approach to implementation;
- Timescales;
- Priorities and next steps for the Programme; and
- Improvement activities in the Revenues and Benefits Unit.

Key points and queries that arose from the committee's discussion included:

- Seeking assurances that the Council's Public Services Network (PSN) was robust;
- How those residents who were digitally excluded or who did not contact the Council digitally would be consulted with;
- Noting that young people can also experience digital exclusion;
- The timescales for implementation of the new CRM system;
- Whether the new CRM system would allow photo uploads;
- How a non-resident could report an issue through the CRM system;
- The possible impact of decommissioning the previous CRM system without all current functionality being delivered; and
- Whether emails would remain a channel for communication.

The Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services explained that RBDxP was a key workstream under the Council's Future Shape programme, which sought to replace the current CRM system, integration technology and website with an

integrated digital platform which worked collaboratively for the benefit of residents, members and businesses when interacting with the Council. He highlighted the extensive engagement which had taken place with residents, community groups, businesses and members to ensure these new systems meet their needs and expectations. He stated that a series of user personas had been developed and would be at the heart of the system design to overcome any barriers and challenges users currently faced when interacting with Council services.

In response to queries, the Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services stated that retaining PSN-compliance was a priority for the programme and this was largely the driving factor behind the deadline to replace the current CRM system by February 2024. He explained that significant work around form build and design had been undertaken and that further progress could be made now that Verint had been appointed as the Council's CRM provider.

Regarding the engagement methods, the committee was advised that the programme would not replace technology like-for-like but would improve the experience of and the way that the Council communicated with residents and businesses to allow for a more joined-up experience. The Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services explained that there had been direct engagement with Age Friendly Manchester and a number of public drop-in sessions had been held with the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team and work had been undertaken with the digital inclusion team. The RBDxP Programme Manager stated that feedback sessions had been held in the Town Hall Extension, Central Library, Longsight and Gorton. Additional forums had been held in Chorlton, Moss Side, Clayton, Piccadilly and the Northern Quarter and a Residents User Group had been established with over 100 members.

The Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services acknowledged an urgency to replace the Council's current CRM system by February 2024 and this would be completed on a like-for-like basis to ensure that the Council remains PSN-compliant. Once implemented like-for-like, there would be a number of phases rolled out over a period of approximately 18-24 months to refine the technology. He noted that any, if possible, 'quick wins' such as photo uploads would be implemented by February 2024 if feasible.

Assurances were also provided that services would be designed to be quick and easy to use to allow those with the ability to interact digitally with the Council to do so and to allow greater availability in traditional communication channels, such as telephony services, for those users who require these.

In response to a query regarding how a non-resident could report an issue through the CRM system, the RBDxP Programme Manager explained that a user persona had been created for visitors to encompass the experience and challenges they may face.

The Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services explained that Verint and Mulesoft were leading market providers, and the procurement process was split into three cohorts which enabled integration between the two technologies. Both providers had been informed of the timescales for implementation. He also advised that as the CRM system was a workflow between Customer Services and the relevant department that the query would be directed to, so users would not see much difference from the replacement and should have a seamless experience. Contact centre agents and service areas would be fully trained before February 2024.

Assurances were also provided that processes would be put in place in the event that the system functionalities could not be replaced like-for-like prior to the launch date to ensure that residents and businesses would not be impacted.

It was confirmed that emails would continue to be available as a channel for members to report issues and request services.

Decision:

That the report be noted.

RGSC/23/53 2024/25 Budget Process

The committee considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer which on the current position of the Medium-Term Financial Plan and the planned approach to the 2024/25 budget process.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- The current Medium-Term Financial Plan, approved in February 2023;
- The context behind the budget;
- The proposed approach and refresh of the 2024/25 position; and
- Timescales and next steps.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer stated that the government's Autumn Statement would be provided on 22 November 2023 with the Finance Settlement expected in late December.

Members expressed their disappointment that the Council had to prepare in such a manner as a result of the unpredictability of the government to provide adequate funding and to provide this information in a timely manner.

The Deputy City Treasurer commented that the Council was entering a challenging phase with regards to the budget and stated that officers were working to find suitable solutions and hoped to be in a sustainable position.

Decision:

That the proposed approach be noted.

RGSC/23/54 Overview Report

The committee received a report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit which provided details of key decisions that fell within the Committee's remit and items for information previously requested by the Committee. The report also included the Committee's work programme, which the Committee was asked to amend as appropriate and agree.

Decision:

That the report be noted and the work programme agreed.

Environment, Climate Change and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 20 July 2023

Present:

Councillor Shilton Godwin – in the Chair
Councillors Chohan, Collins, Holt, McCaul, Wiest and Wright

Apologies: Councillors Ilyas and Razaq

Also present:

Councillor Rawlins, Executive Member for Environment and Transport
Councillor Foley, Deputy Executive Member for Environment and Transport
Councillor White, Executive Member for Housing and Development

ECCNSC/23/38 Minutes

Decision

To approve the minutes of the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 22 June 2023 as a correct record.

ECCNSC/23/39 Manchester City Council Climate Change Action Plan – Quarter 1 Update Report

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer that provided an update and overview of progress made in delivering the Council's refreshed CCAP during Quarter 1 2023-24 (April – June 2023).

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Key messages from the Quarter 1 Progress Report, noting that since 2020 the Council had remained within its carbon budget each year and the Quarter 1 report showed continued progress was being made with the Council on track to meet its 2025 target;
- Information in relation to CO2 Emissions, reporting that the Council had used 88.5% of its 2022-23 carbon budget during the year (April 2022 – March 2023) and was therefore on track to remain within its carbon budget for this year; and
- Key achievements.

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

- Noting that the current Climate Change Action Plan ran until 2025, and asking had the worked commenced to plan for beyond April 2025;
- Clarification was sought as to the carbon budget;
- Further information was requested on the project delivered in partnership with Wenta and how this was promoted to small businesses;

- More information was sought on the Refill Scheme, commenting that water filling stations needed to be provided to support this scheme, especially in those areas of high footfall; and
- An update was sought on the actions in relation to Clean Air.

The Zero Carbon Manager stated that the carbon budget that had been set for the city was a science-based budget and had been calculated by the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research. She described that the Council's biggest source of carbon emissions were related to the estate and that a lot of work had been done to address this, adding this activity had been regularly reported to the Committee. She acknowledged that reducing carbon emissions going forward in future years would be a challenge and the team were constantly reviewing progress against this work. She further commented on the reliance on grant funding which was often piecemeal to deliver this important programme. She commented that all opportunities to access additional funding were explored and work was underway to understand and unblock the barriers to attracting private finance to deliver this work at the scale required.

The Zero Carbon Manager further made reference to the ongoing current national conversation in relation to alternatives to gas. In response to a comment regarding a risk register she advised that all associated projects had a corresponding risk register.

The Zero Carbon Manager advised the Committee that planning work had commenced for the Climate Change Action Plan beyond April 2025 and this would be reported to the Committee at the appropriate time prior to its submission to Executive for formal adoption.

The Zero Carbon Manager advised that she would liaise with the Work and Skills Team to provide information on the Wenta project and this would be circulated following the meeting. In regard to the Refill Scheme, she commented that an exercise was underway to obtain base line data to understand the current provision across the city and to explore all opportunities to increase these.

The Executive Member for Environment and Transport described that all opportunities to improve air quality were being utilised, including school streets and the use of green screens. She described that work was ongoing at a Greater Manchester level in relation to clean air and monitoring data was being submitted to the government. The Chair stated that a report on this work would be scheduled for consideration by the Committee.

The Executive Member for Environment and Transport stated that regular updates on the range of associated activities were provided to Members via the Zero Carbon Quarterly newsletter that was circulated to all Members. In conclusion she stated that the Council remained committed to the City Council becoming a zero carbon organisation by 2038.

Decision

To note the report.

ECCNSC/23/40 Local Area Energy Plan – Progress Update

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director (Growth & Development) that described that the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) was the first city region in the country to compile and complete Local Area Energy Plans (LAEP) from street to network level. LAEPs had been produced at both the regional level and also for each of the 10 districts. The Greater Manchester and Manchester LAEP were adopted in September 2022. This report provided Members with an overview of the Manchester LAEP and how this would be used to meet our target to be a zero carbon city by 2038.

Key points and themes in the report and accompanying presentation included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Discussion of the opportunities and challenges;
- Priority areas and challenges;
- Discussion of the sphere of influence, noting the council's main role in taking the LAEP forward is that of facilitator and enabler rather than as a main delivery agent;
- Progress to date; and
- Next steps.

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

- Information was sought on the progress to decarbonise the electric national grid;
- The need to lobby government for regulation of the domestic heat network;
- Discussing the national debate regarding the viability of hydrogen as a viable alternative to gas;
- The need to provide information to residents and homeowners to make informed, positive decisions in relation to alternative domestic heating options; and
- Was the data referred to throughout the report open data and available to residents, commenting that these were very informative.

The Chair commented that the Committee would be receiving a substantive update report on the Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy at the next meeting and questions and comments on this subject would be reserved for that meeting. The Committee further noted that an update on the Local Plan would be submitted for consideration at the November meeting.

The Principal Policy Officer stated that lobbying of government continued in relation to regulation of the domestic heat network and that any available information in regard to the decarbonisation of the electricity grid would be provided following the meeting. In response to the discussion regarding hydrogen as a viable alternative fuel for domestic boilers she stated they were alive to the national debate on this issue, commenting that direction from government was required on this issue. The Interim Head of Infrastructure and Environment commented that in the absence of any direction from government a position would need to be adopted locally.

The Principal Policy Officer commented that the data that was referenced within the report was available for members of the public to access.

The Strategic Director Development discussed the role of the Council in relation lobbying and influence. She stated that the Council was proactive on a range of issues, drawing down funding wherever possible to help resource the Council's response to the LAEP, and made reference to the work in relation to housing retrofit and Electric Vehicle Charging. She stated that the LAEP would assist with highlighting priorities for the Council to focus a response.

The Chair requested that any future update report included consideration and data in relation to demand management and energy generation when discussing the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

The Executive Member for Environment and Transport stated that the Local Area Energy Plan provided an evidence-based tool on which to continue to lobby government. She stated that reflection and review of this area of activity was regularly undertaken and conversations with other cities were convened to share learning and experience.

Decision

To note the report.

ECCNSC/23/41 Integrated Water Management

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Planning, Licensing and Building Control that provided a summary of the Council's approach to slowing water flow and water capture, with a particular focus on nature-based solutions and consideration of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Information on the outcomes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Report on Integrated Water Management that was presented to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) in May 2023;
- Describing the draft Integrated Water Management Plan; and
- Discussion of nature based solutions.

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

- There was little or no reference within the report to the canal network, recognising the complexities relating to the diverse ownership;
- What was the approach to Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS);
- What was the approach taken to new developments to ensure they were sustainable and how was this monitored and enforced;
- The need to communicate to residents the risks of flooding and mitigating actions that could be taken, in particular in regard to paving over green space; and
- The need for developers to consider water capture and storage.

The Director of Planning, Licensing and Building Control stated that she had welcomed the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Report on Integrated Water Management for raising the profile of this important issue. She stated that canals were included in the open space audit and were included in the green and blue infrastructure strategy and action plan. She acknowledged the challenge of waterways and the need to engage with all relevant partners, neighbouring authorities and those beyond Greater Manchester on the issue of waterway management and she made reference to the Greater Manchester Integrated Water Management Plan that was currently subject to consultation.

The Director of Planning, Licensing and Building Control stated that SuDS would be included in Local Plan and stated that it was anticipated that these would be mandatory from 2024. She commented that in anticipation of this, dialogue and work was currently underway locally with developers on this issue and colleagues in the Highways Department had produced guidance for developers.

The Director of Planning, Licensing and Building Control commented that flood zones were mapped across the city and this intelligence informed how all proposed developments were assessed. She commented that the Local Plan would strengthen the control in regard to sustainable development standards, however pending finalisation and adoption of the Local Plan proactive dialogue and conversations were undertaken with developers to push for sustainable buildings, including discussions on water capture and storage.

The Executive Member for Environment and Transport acknowledged the importance of communications with residents on the issue of flooding and the promotion of actions that residents could take to mitigate risk. She stated that this would be included in the city-wide communication programmes.

Decision

To note the report.

[Councillor Shilton Godwin declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest as she chaired the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Report on Integrated Water Management.]

ECCNSC/23/42 Update on the Manchester Biodiversity Strategy and the Open Space Study

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Planning, Licensing and Building Control that provided an update on delivery of the Biodiversity Strategy that was endorsed by Executive in October 2022.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Describing the objectives of the Biodiversity Strategy; and
- Information on the findings of the open space audit that would inform the development of the emerging Local Plan.

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

- The need to communicate to residents those areas of land designated to be areas for meadows and wildflowers, as the perception was often that the Council had failed to cut the grass;
- Enquiring where the 344 sites referred to in Recommendation 3 being rated as below quality and/or value thresholds were;
- Would the Local Plan increase biodiversity;
- The need to ensure green space was maintained, including those associated with the highways network;
- Noting that the focus of the study referred to was on sites with public access that were larger than 0.2 hectares and the need to acknowledge the importance of smaller green spaces, especially in the city centre;
- Recognising the importance of access to quality green space for residents;
- Noting the impact of the urban heat island effect.

The Director of Planning, Licensing and Building Control acknowledged the comment regarding the importance of communicating with residents the approach to meadows and wildflowers and stated that she would discuss this further with the relevant Executive Member. She said that an exercise was underway to provide a visual aid that mapped the 344 sites referred to in Recommendation 3. She stated that the Local Plan would make it mandatory for 10% increase in biodiversity associated with all new developments and this would be regulated through the establishment of long-term management plans to be formalised through legal agreements and conditions.

In response to a specific question regarding the location of the Tiny Forest and data relating to training referred to in the report that had been delivered by partners and the cohorts of people involved she advised that she would follow that up outside of the meeting.

The Director of Planning, Licensing and Building Control noted and agreed with the comment made regarding the importance of smaller green spaces. She advised that the ambition was to increase Sites of Biological Importance and there was a pipeline of work at pace to increase the number of nature reserves across the city.

The Executive Member for Environment and Transport responded to a comment from a Member regarding the communication with Councillors regarding events by stating that this would have been done using the usual channels.

The Executive Member for Housing and Development reiterated the importance of accessibility to quality green space to local residents and stated that he welcomed the introduction of the Local Plan as means to increase biodiversity and mitigate issues such as the urban heat island effect.

The Executive Member for Environment and Transport acknowledged the discussion regarding grass cutting, meadows and the use of verges to promote and encourage biodiversity and encouraged Members to pursue this with their respective Neighbourhood Teams. She concluded by thanking all of the officers involved in this important area of work and acknowledged the importance of this work for the city.

She stated that this work had been recognised nationally as a model of good practice.

Decision

To note the report.

[Councillor Weist declared a personal and non-pecuniary interest as she had previously been an employee of Groundwork.]

ECCNSC/23/43 Overview Report

The report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit which contained key decisions within the Committee's remit and responses to previous recommendations was submitted for comment. Members were also invited to agree the Committee's future work programme.

Decision

The Committee notes the report and agrees the work programme.

Environment, Climate Change and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2023

Present:

Councillor Shilton Godwin – in the Chair

Councillors Chohan, Collins, Holt, Ilyas, McCaul, Wiest and Wright

Apologies: Councillor Razaq

Also present:

Councillor Rawlins, Executive Member for Environment and Transport

Councillor Igbon, Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods

Councillor Ahmed Ali, Deputy Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods

Councillor White, Executive Member for Housing and Development

Councillor Hacking, Executive Member for Employment, Skills and Leisure

Matt Roberts, Strategic Director, Property and Development, Southway Housing Trust

ECCNSC/23/44 Minutes

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 20 July 2023 as a correct record.

ECCNSC/23/45 Manchester City Council Climate Change Action Plan 2022/23 Annual Report

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer that presented the third Annual Report of the Manchester City Council Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) 2020-25.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Noting that this report brought together updates to the Committee provided over the last 12 months (April 22 – March 23) into a single report and highlighted progress made during this time against the CCAP Work Plan 2022-23 as well as progress made on the Council's direct carbon emissions;
- Key messages;
- Key achievements; and
- Summary and next steps.

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

- Further information was sought regarding the reported sustainable practices within Highways;

- Recognising the significant challenges post 2025 to continue delivering on this important work and deliver the stated ambition for the organisation to become zero carbon by 2038 at the latest;
- Request that comparative data and analysis of the communications strategy was needed to understand the impact on behaviour change, recognising that this could be difficult to quantify and report;
- Analysis as to the impact of the poster and billboard campaigns was requested;
- Commenting that Active Travel schemes needed to be coordinated and linked up with neighbouring authority schemes to deliver connectivity across the city region;
- A request for information on the next round of tree planting; and
- Commenting on the need to decarbonise the national electricity grid.

The Principal Resources and Programmes Officer, Zero Carbon Team informed the Committee that Scope 3 emissions associated with Highways (Scope 3 encompasses emissions that are not produced by the company itself and were not the result of activities from assets owned or controlled by them, but by those that it's indirectly responsible for up and down its value chain) were not accounted in the carbon budget. The Chair commented that responsibility for Highways sat within the remit of the Economy and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee and that she would speak with the Chair to discuss bringing a report on this area of activity to that Committee.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer acknowledged the discussion regarding communications campaigns and informed the Committee that a substantive report was scheduled for consideration at the December meeting. Similarly, a report on a Power Purchase Agreement was listed for the November meeting. The Chair referred to a comment made regarding young people and climate change and advised that this had been considered recently by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee and asked that the Scrutiny Support Officer circulate the report that had been considered to all Committee members for information.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer noted the comments regarding Active Travel and commented that the next stage of planning around this activity would include consideration of joining up schemes as part of wider infrastructure planning considerations. She further commented that she shared Members' disappointment in relation to national policy towards decarbonisation of the national electricity grid.

The Zero Carbon Manager advised the Committee that discussions and planning were ongoing regarding establishing an action plan post 2025, acknowledging the comment from a Member regarding the importance of adaptation and resilience as part of these discussions.

The Zero Carbon Manager further responded to questions regarding resident engagement by advising that a report on Neighbourhood Teams Engagement with Residents was scheduled for consideration at the December meeting.

The Executive Member for Environment and Transport stated that work across Greater Manchester was ongoing in relation to Active Travel and expressed her

frustration that funding to deliver such schemes was piecemeal and inadequate to deliver the ambitions of the city region, however lobbying of government would continue on this subject. She advised that a report on the Manchester Active Travel Strategy and Investment Plan was scheduled for the November meeting, and she further acknowledged the comment made regarding the need to promote diversity when encouraging cycling.

The Executive Member for Environment and Transport informed the Committee that a report on the Tree and Woodland Action Plan was listed for consideration at the November meeting, adding that Members were informed via the regular Member communication channels when any planting of trees in their ward was scheduled.

The Chair concluded this item of business by acknowledging the work delivered by all the officers working in this area of activity and paid tribute to their continued dedication to this important work.

Decision

To note the report.

ECCNSC/23/46 Street Cleansing Programme and Campaigns Update

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) that provided an update on street cleansing services and the Keep Manchester Tidy programme. Describing how the activity contributes to protecting the environment, climate change agenda and key priorities for future.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Information regarding cleansing standards;
- Information relating to the street cleansing contract;
- An update on the additional investment in waste collection and street cleansing services;
- Improvements to the street cleansing model;
- Street cleansing performance;
- Information on education, awareness and engaging local communities;
- Trials and innovations to tackle all forms of littering; and
- Priorities for 2023/24.

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

- Information was requested on the criteria and definitions of the cleansing standards;
- Information was sought as to the location of the additional (200) litter bins secured through the investment to deliver service improvements;
- The challenge presented by different landowners across the city to apply consistent cleansing standards;
- How did activities associated with building works and construction impact on Biffa and service delivery;

- How could Members engage with, and seek to influence Keep Manchester Tidy campaigns; and
- The importance of maintaining cleaning standards in cycle lanes to ensure they remained safe for users.

The Contract Manager, Waste acknowledged the comments and requests from Members around the issue of standards and their application and monitoring; information on the steam cleaning trials in district centres; approach to cycle lane cleansing and suggested that he prepared a detailed briefing note to be circulated following the meeting. He further extended an invitation to Members to accompany officers when undertaking inspections.

The Strategic Lead, Waste, Recycling & Street Cleansing Team advised that the trials relating to litter bins waste storage containers, measures to target harden infrastructure and the additional bins were initially in the city centre, and consideration would be given as to other appropriate locations. Investment had been agreed to replace litter bin infrastructure citywide. She further commented that they worked closely with different landowners to influence improvements and that they worked with Biffa to reduce the escape of detritus when bins were emptied.

The Project Officer advised that Keep Manchester Tidy campaigns were fast paced projects and acknowledged that timely communications with Members on these activities needed to be strengthened. She discussed the campaign delivered on the issue of discarded chewing gum, commenting that this had been delivered in partnership with City Co and the Universities. She added that consideration was being given as to how this campaign could be rolled out wider across the city.

The Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods addressed comments made regarding comparative data across different wards and expressed caution as it was important to acknowledge that different wards and localities presented different opportunities and challenges. She informed Members that the autumn street cleansing programme would be communicated to all Members via the usual communication channels. She further commented that Members should liaise with their respective Neighbourhood Teams about local Keep Manchester Tidy projects. Noting a comment from the Chair regarding the importance of maintaining standards and leaf removal from cycle lanes she stated that if there were specific locations of concern that Members contact the relevant officers so these could be addressed.

The Chair concluded this item of business by acknowledging the work delivered by all the officers working in this area of activity.

Decision

To note the report.

ECCNSC/23/47 Housing Retrofit

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director, Growth and Development that provided an update on the Council's proposals to decarbonise the city's housing, incorporating an update on Green Skills.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background to the subject area;
- Discussion of the approach to Social Housing, including Council owned properties;
- Consideration of Private Sector Housing;
- Consideration of the approach to cross tenure housing and area based schemes;
- Engagement activity;
- Skills, including the Greater Manchester approach;
- Funding considerations;
- The importance of partnership working;
- Discussion of internal staff resources;
- Information on developing a Retrofit Plan document; and
- Conclusion.

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

- Calling for continued lobbying of the government for the decarbonisation of the national grid;
- Calling for continued lobbying of the government for adequate financial resources to deliver the scale of retrofitting required across the city region, particularly to address the barriers experienced in the private rented sector;
- The need to regulate heat networks to protect residents from unreasonable price hikes in their energy;
- Were there any pilot schemes that individual tenants, keen to adopt new technologies and alternatives to address climate change could access;
- What work was being done with property managing agents and leaseholders to support and allow tenants / occupiers to install new technologies such as solar panels etc;

The Committee heard from Matt Roberts, Strategic Director, Property and Development, Southway Housing Trust who delivered a presentation that discussed the Arrowfield Low Carbon Communities Project. He informed the Committee that Southway had pledged to become a zero-carbon organisation by 2038, following Greater Manchester's climate emergency declaration. Switching from gas to electricity was one way to reduce carbon emissions and tackle climate change. The Low Carbon Living Project was helping Southway's tenants on the Arrowfield estate switch to cleaner, greener, and cheaper energy to heat their homes.

Mr Roberts explained that many of the heating systems in the homes on the Arrowfield estate were old and needed replacing. The government will be banning gas boilers in new properties in 2025, so replacing like for like would not be appropriate. Therefore, Southway had decided to invest in heating and hot water systems that did not use gas. The old gas systems would be replaced with new 'air source heat pump' technology that only used electricity. In addition, other energy saving projects would be carried out at the same time, such as improved loft and cavity wall insulation. These improvements could reduce households' carbon footprint by as much as 50%.

There were nearly 400 properties on the Arrowfield estate, making it one of Southway's biggest neighbourhoods. Therefore, the Low Carbon Living Project would make a significant impact on Southway achieving its zero-carbon ambitions.

He advised the committee of the challenges experienced when delivering this project and the lessons learnt. He said that it was important to engage with the District Network Operator at the earliest opportunity and emphasised the importance of meaningful, ongoing resident engagement. He also stated that issues and delays had arisen when seeking relevant planning permissions that had not been anticipated. The Chair thanked Mr Roberts for attending the meeting and sharing the experience of Southway Housing Trust. She commented that the learning from delivering this project should be shared across all housing providers at an appropriate time. In response to a question from the Chair, the Executive Member for Housing and Development confirmed that he would facilitate meetings and dialogue between the planning department and Southway Housing Trust.

The Executive Member for Employment, Skills and Leisure provided an update on the developments across the education and training sector, referenced at sections 7 and 8 of the report. The Committee noted the importance of green skills and training and welcomed the update. The Chair advised the Committee that Skills Development sat within the remit of the Economy and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee.

The Zero Carbon Programme Manager addressed the issue of the private rented sector and commented that this was a very challenging sector to engage with. She stated that all opportunities and levers were used to engage with private landlords on this subject.

In response to the specific questions relating to individual tenants and pilot schemes and the issue of managing agents, officers advised that they would follow this up outside of the meeting and contact the Member directly.

The Head of Strategic Housing acknowledged the comment and concern regarding the Heat Network and advised that the Council managed and controlled this system.

The Executive Member for Environment and Transport advised that the Climate Change Partnership continued to lobby the government for appropriate levels of funding to deliver the scale of work required across the city region, adding that historically funding had been piecemeal that had to be bid for.

Decision

To note the report.

ECCNSC/23/48 Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director, Growth and Development that provided an update on progress following the adoption of the Manchester Electric Vehicle Charging (EV) Strategy.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background to the topic,
- Discussion of the main challenges;
- Information in relation to Public Charging Network;
- The Public EV Procurement Process;
- The approach to support the move towards a cleaner taxi fleet;
- Consideration of the requirements for the installation of EV charge points as part of both new build developments and change of use developments;
- Consideration of the council's own vehicle fleet; and
- Consideration of on-street charging, noting that this presented particular challenges, especially in residential areas with informal parking arrangements such as terraced streets.

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

- Articulating the request from residents for additional on-street EV charging points, especially in high density areas such as the city centre, and reflecting the proportion of areas in the city there is no or little off-street parking
- Additional information was requested on the data and information that had been used to inform the report;
- Suggesting increased access for the public to charging points by working with employers who provide EVs on their sites and owned land;
- The need to consider all viable options and opportunities to deliver on-street EV charging to give residents confidence to change to an electric vehicle; and
- Need and demand for EV charging across the whole of the city needed to be considered.

The Principal Policy Officer informed the Committee that a draft list of locations (over 40 in total) had been developed and internal agreement was currently being sought for these locations to supply, install, manage and operate a scheme of up to 200 connectors (100 dual headed chargepoints) to be installed over a two year period. The locations were geographically spread across the city to ensure that chargepoints would be accessible to as many residents as possible. She said that the Members would have sight of these locations prior to a go-live date, however at this time it was not possible to share more widely as these were subject to change and not finalised. She advised that consideration was given to maximising all opportunities using Council owned land and appropriate consideration was given to developments in battery technology.

The Principal Policy Officer discussed the issue of the use of lamp posts to deliver EV charging on- street. She stated this was not considered as a viable option due to a number of factors, including the position of lampposts at the rear of pavements; capacity within the existing grid, adding that lampposts would only offer a very slow charge time; costs associated with additional necessary highways works to deliver that type of EV charging facility.

The Interim Head of Infrastructure and Environment commented that Manchester continued to discuss and learn from other authorities on this issue.

The Executive Member for Environment and Transport commented that Manchester was constrained due to the inadequate funding from government to progress this work. She said that despite this all opportunities were explored to support residents transition to electric vehicles. She proposed to review the strategy as it was clear that members felt that it needed to demonstrate more ambition. She further stated that this programme of work needed to be considered in the wider strategic context of citywide travel including via public transport and active travel.

Decision

The Committee recommend that a review of the Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy be undertaken in due course to more rapidly increase the proportion of residents able to change to an electric vehicle with confidence.

ECCNSC/23/49 Overview Report

The report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit which contained key decisions within the Committee's remit and responses to previous recommendations was submitted for comment. Members were also invited to agree the Committee's future work programme.

The Committee requested an update report on Housing Retrofit and an update on the delivery of the Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy be included on the Committee's Work Programme for consideration at an appropriate time.

Decision

The Committee notes the report and agrees the work programme, subject to the above comments.