

Economy and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday, 6 February 2024

Present:

Councillor Johns – in the Chair

Councillors Abdullatif, Benham, Hussain, Richards, I Robinson and Shilton Godwin

Also present:

Councillor Akbar, Executive Member for Finance and Resources

Councillor Hacking, Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure

Councillor Rahman, Statutory Deputy Leader

Councillor Rawlins, Executive Member for Environment and Transport

Councillor White, Executive Member for Housing and Development

Jonathan Marsh, Head of Strategic Planning, Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM)

John McGrath, Artistic Director and Chief Executive, Factory International

Randel Bryan, Executive Director and Deputy Chief Executive, Factory International

Menaka Munro, Head of Engagement, Factory International

Apologies:

Councillors Iqbal, Northwood and Taylor

ERSC/24/06 Minutes

Decision

That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2024 be approved as a correct record.

ERSC/24/07 Manchester City Council Climate Change Action Plan – Progress Update – Transport Emissions

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director (Growth and Development) and the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) which provided an update and overview of progress made in delivery of the Transport and Travel workstreams within the Climate Change Action Plan from 2020 to 2025.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Progress against Climate Change Action Plan commitments in relation to direct emissions;
- Work to reduce the broader citywide emissions associated with highways-based transport and travel; and
- Future actions.

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

- The trajectory of overall emissions from transport in the city and the levers available to the Council to influence this;
- That the 'Right Mix' element of the 2040 Transport Strategy should be reviewed;
- The impact of congestion on the city and its economy;
- Taxis which were licensed outside of the city;
- Levels of car ownership in different parts of the city and whether this influenced prioritisation of investment;
- Meeting demand for Electric Vehicle charging;
- Idling vehicles, particularly around schools;
- The benefits of the Active Neighbourhoods scheme in Levenshulme and Burnage;
- When would the Manchester bus fleet be fully electric; and
- The impact of the City Centre Strategy on wards on the outskirts of the city centre and how these issues could be addressed.

The Director of Highways reported that a policy was being produced on Electric Vehicle charging, advising that interim measures would be needed, for example in relation to trailing cables across footpaths, until the technology developed further to enable quicker charging and more permanent infrastructure was in place. The Assistant Director (Infrastructure and Environment) informed the Committee about funding of approximately £3.3 million which the Council had secured to improve the provision of Electric Vehicle charging and the options being considered for how to invest this money.

In response to the question about car idling, the Director of Highways highlighted the role of softer measures, such as signage around schools, advising that there were challenges with undertaking enforcement action in relation to this but that he would look into whether more could be done, in relation to both enforcement and education. The Executive Member for Environment and Transport reported that the Enforcement Team were starting to address this, initially speaking to drivers who were idling, to be followed by a media campaign.

In response to a Member's comments about the 'Right Mix' vision within the Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040, Jonathan Marsh, Head of Strategic Planning, TfGM, reported that this had been developed prior to the pandemic, that there had been a lot of changes to travel behaviour since then and that TfGM was reviewing the 'Right Mix' as part of the work to update the Local Transport Plan. In response to a question on the timescale for this, he stated that a consultation would take place around autumn or winter 2024, depending on when the General Election was held, and that stakeholders such as Councillors would be consulted as part of this. He highlighted that 'Right Mix' was not only about transport but also required changes to land use planning to enable people to travel more locally, as well as digital connectivity leading to a reduction in some journeys. In response to a comment about journeys into the city centre, he highlighted that the City Centre Transport Strategy included a target for 90% of journeys into the city centre to be made by public transport or active travel.

In response to a Member's comments, the Assistant Director (Infrastructure and Environment) reported that a lot of work had taken place in relation to transport emissions and that over the next year it would need to be drawn together into a cohesive programme under the Climate Change Action Plan and feed into the refresh of the Plan, noting the city's ambitions to be a leader in this work.

The Strategic Director (Growth and Development) reported that taxi licensing standards were part of the Clean Air Plan but that these could only be implemented for taxis which were licensed in Greater Manchester, although taxis licensed elsewhere could operate in the region, adding that this was an issue that the Government had been lobbied on. She reported that an analysis of both car ownership and areas which were under-served by public transport informed investment decisions. In response to a Member's request, she agreed to provide data on car ownership across the city.

In response to a Member's question about whether there were any other levers which could be used to discourage taxis licensed elsewhere from operating in Manchester, such as not allowing them to use bus lanes, the Director of Highways advised that he would look into this and respond to the Member.

In response to a Member's comment about the issues affecting wards on the outskirts of the city centre, the Director of Highways drew Members' attention to the safer schools work, including both education and engineering measures to improve safety and encourage active travel to school. He reported that residents' parking schemes were being introduced in some areas to address the issue of displacement of parking from the city centre, although he advised that there were challenges in getting all affected residents to support these schemes. He reported that city centre parking controls were also being reviewed.

Jonathan Marsh from TfGM highlighted work to encourage people, through investment, to access public transport earlier in their journey. He reported that there was significant investment taking place in making the bus fleet electric and he offered to provide further information on this.

In response to a question from the Chair about refreshing the City Centre Transport Strategy, the Strategic Director (Growth and Development) advised that this was a complex piece of work and outlined how a range of studies and factors would inform this work, citing as examples of the issues that would need to be considered access for businesses and access to business and residential parking in the city centre which was not within the Council's control. In response to a request from the Chair to share the Walkability Study with the Committee, she agreed to share studies which would underpin this work as they emerged, including the Walkability Study, and suggested that the Committee consider the City Centre Transport Strategy and Movement Plan at a future meeting, to which the Chair agreed.

Decisions:

1. To note the latest position on the development and delivery of the transport and highways commitments within the Climate Change Action Plan.

2. To recommend that the Council's representatives on TfGM and the GMCA communicate the recommendation that the 'Right Mix' deliver carbon reductions in line with the Council's carbon budget.
3. To note that the Strategic Director (Growth and Development) will provide the requested data on car ownership across the city.
4. To note that the Director of Highways will advise whether there are any levers which can be used to discourage taxis licensed elsewhere from operating in Manchester, such as not allowing them to use bus lanes.
5. To request that the Walkability Study be shared with Committee Members.
6. That the Committee will consider the City Centre Transport Strategy and Movement Plan at a future meeting

[Councillor Johns declared a personal interest due to a research project he was undertaking on bus decarbonisation.]

ERSC/24/08 Annual Culture Report 2024

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) which provided an annual culture update setting out the full work programme of the Council's culture team.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- The Council's investments in arts and culture;
- Cultural Impact Survey;
- Zero carbon;
- Loads to Do website;
- Manchester Culture Awards 2023;
- International partnerships and other collaborations; and
- Cultural Strategy.

The Committee also received a presentation which provided an overview of the Cultural Impact Survey 2022/23.

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

- The importance of culture to the city and to welcome the achievements in this area;
- The decrease in volunteering and freelancers since the pandemic;
- Engagement with schools;
- Addressing the under-representation of non-white residents;
- How culture was defined including the role of smaller events outside of the city centre;
- The financial challenges facing the sector; and

- The importance of having spaces for creativity in local communities, to increase participation and engagement and to encourage and enable local residents to develop careers in the creative industries.

In response to comments about a decrease in volunteering, the Statutory Deputy Leader reported that the culture sector was still recovering from the pandemic, as well as being affected by the cost-of-living crisis and austerity, although investment in the sector had been maintained in Manchester. He acknowledged Members' points about culture encompassing a wide range of events and activities across the city, stating that the Cultural Impact Survey provided a snapshot of the organisations surveyed but that the team would look into how this could be expanded to capture broader cultural events.

The Policy and Programmes Manager (Culture) reported that the work on the Cultural Strategy indicated that the culture in people's lives was a lot more diverse than what was included in the Cultural Impact Survey, which was largely about the city centre-based cultural offer, based on the organisations which had responded to the Survey. She welcomed a Member's comment about work that a school in her ward had been doing and the good practice which could be shared more widely. She reported that the pandemic had highlighted the vulnerability of the freelance workforce and that positive initiatives had been introduced as a result of this.

The Director of Culture reported that it was a challenging environment for cultural organisations at present and that many were having to re-negotiate their Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) with their funders due to the impact of the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis, particularly energy costs. He reported that the cost-of-living crisis was impacting on both the supply and demand sides, with the costs of staging a production increasing and audiences having less disposal income. He reported that the Government tax relief schemes had helped but that smaller organisations struggled to access these. He reported that cultural organisations in the city were working together, using creative and collaborative approaches, to get through this difficult period. In response to comments from the Chair about ticket prices, he reported that all the organisations that the Council provided funding to had affordable ticketing policies and made affordable tickets available but that, with costs increasing and no corresponding increase in funding, ticket prices were having to be increased.

The Principal Resources and Programmes Officer (Culture) advised that the decrease in volunteering was likely to be due to people not being able to afford to volunteer and organisations not being able to afford the costs associated with running a volunteering programme. He acknowledged Members' points about local culture, advising that cultural organisations based in local wards drove cultural engagement in those areas. He informed Members about a Place Partnership bid to the Arts Council and highlighted the Loads To Do website, which promoted low and no-cost events and activities, especially those in local neighbourhoods. He reported that the Cultural Impact Survey had been sent to approximately 200 organisations and that responses had been received from 22 funded organisations – which were required to respond – and 21 other organisations. He advised that there was quite a lot of work involved in responding to the survey and that consideration could be given to producing a less detailed version of the survey for the non-funded

organisations to encourage them to respond. In response to the Member's comments about having creative spaces in local communities, he informed Members that a Cultural Portfolio Board had been established to look into whether spaces in the city which were owned by the Council or partners could be viable places for cultural activity.

The Chair informed Members that the Committee would be scrutinising the Cultural Strategy in the next municipal year. He reported that he would raise his concerns about the re-organisation of music education with the Chair of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to ascertain if her Committee would be scrutinising this.

The Statutory Deputy Leader reported that the city had worked to support freelancers during the pandemic, using a £500,000 donation from a philanthropist, but that this was only a fraction of what was needed and freelancers had been badly affected. He drew Members' attention to the role of MADE, Manchester's Cultural Education Partnership, while expressing concern about limited resources for this work. He recognised that more work needed to be done in relation to diversity and stated that the cultural organisations in the city were aware of this and he hoped that future reports would demonstrate progress being made.

Decision:

To note the report.

ERSC/24/09 Factory International – Manchester International Festival 2023 and Aviva Studios opening season

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) which provided an overview of the information and data relating to Manchester International Festival (MIF) 2023 and the opening season of Aviva Studios from October to date.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- The impact of MIF23;
- The economic impact of MIF23;
- The opening season of Aviva Studios;
- Manchester City Council support for the Festival and Aviva Studios; and
- Performance against strategic objectives.

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

- To welcome the city's achievements in relation to the Manchester International Festival and Factory International and to recognise the value of investing to achieve economic and social impact;
- Positive experiences of Manchester International Festival and events at Aviva Studios;
- Whether Factory International would be setting more ambitious targets for the coming year;

- The appointment of a new Chair of Manchester International Festival, which traded as Factory International and delivered MIF every two years; and
- Strengthening community engagement.

John McGrath, Artistic Director and Chief Executive, Factory International reported that Moira Sinclair had been appointed as the new Chair of MIF and, in response to Members' comments, he highlighted that it had a diverse Board which reflected the city's population. He provided clarification on the figures on job creation within the report, advising that most jobs created by MIF were temporary but that, with the establishment of Factory International, there were now approximately 140 permanent employees and he offered to provide further statistics. He highlighted the role of Factory Academy, the organisation's talent development scheme. He also highlighted Factory International's performance against its key indicators set out a 7.2 in the report and outlined how the targets might be amended in future, which he advised could include setting more ambitious targets for some indicators but also taking a more in-depth look in relation to some of the statistics, for example, looking at whether different parts of the city were accessing affordable ticket options rather than just looking at the overall figure on affordable ticket purchases. In response to a question about South Asian artists and audiences, he agreed that more work needed to be done on this and stated that his organisation was looking into some specific, targeted initiatives. He acknowledged a Member's comment about the economic impact of volunteers, stating that he would look into how this was assessed.

In response to a Member's question, Randel Bryan, Executive Director and Deputy Chief Executive, Factory International reported that economic impact included both visitor spend and Factory International's investment in artwork and productions. He highlighted some of the figures on economic impact from the report, advising that Manchester International Festival was still critical to the vision and purpose of Factory International. The Principal Resources and Programmes Officer (Culture) offered to provide clarification on the definition of "attendees" and "visits" used in the report following the meeting. The Chair requested that in future reports these definitions be clarified.

Menaka Munro, Head of Engagement, Factory International informed Members about the two key programmes for community engagement, Neighbourhood Organisers and the Community Partnerships Programme. She reported that Neighbourhood Organisers were paid roles working in specific areas of the city, developing audiences and providing the organisation with feedback on the needs of their communities and the way the organisation worked. She reported that this programme would develop and grow over the coming year, with additional Neighbourhood Organisers being recruited. She reported that the Community Partnerships Programme involved equitable contracts with a community venue, where Factory International provided £10,000 worth of support for their organisational and community development and worked with them to build the arts offer in their area and bring people into the venue to participate. She reported that Factory International was planning to recruit two further community partners.

Decision:

To note the report.

ERSC/24/10 Revenue Budget Update 2024/25

The Committee received a report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer which provided a high-level overview of the updated budget position. It set out the latest forecast revenue budget position, and the next steps. Following the Provisional Finance Settlement announced on 18 December 2023, the Council was forecasting an estimated budget shortfall of £38m in 2024/25, £79m in 2025/26, and £90m by 2026/27. After the application of approved and planned savings, and the use of c.£17m smoothing reserves in each of the three years, the budget was balanced for 2024/25 and the remaining gap reduced to £29m in 2025/26 and £41m by 2026/27. This position assumed that savings of £21.4m were delivered next year.

Key points and themes within this report included:

- Changes to the budget position;
- Summary budget position;
- Budget consultation;
- Equalities impact and anti-poverty assessments;
- Scrutiny of the draft proposals and the budget reports; and
- Next steps.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources stated that the Government's approach to the Local Government Settlement had been chaotic and only announced just before Christmas. He reported that the final announcement had resulted in a cut of 84% in the Services Grant and that this equated to a £6.1m cut for Manchester. He stated that this had resulted in an outcry from local authorities and MPs from all political parties. He stated that this situation needed to be understood in the context of 14 years of austerity and Government funding cuts and unfunded pressures such as inflation and population growth.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources added that the Government had then announced an additional £500m for Social Care; however, local authorities were still facing a £4bn budget gap nationally, resulting in a number of local authorities serving a Section 144 notice and it was anticipated that more would follow.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources commented that, despite this, Manchester had set a balanced budget and this had been achieved through diligent planning and management that had seen strategic investment in preventative initiatives; using financial reserves prudently and investment in activities that were important for Manchester residents, such as libraries; leisure centres, highways, parks and green spaces and reducing the carbon footprint.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources stated that although Manchester had been able to deliver a balanced budget this year, the Council's financial position was expected to become even more challenging. The projected budget gap, even

after using reserves for 25/26, was £29m in 2025/26 and £41m in 2026/27. He expressed concern that the Government had continually failed to listen to local authorities.

The Chair supported the Executive Member for Finance and Resources' remarks in relation to the national Government and the impact of its decisions and actions on local government.

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

- That there was widespread concern about the cuts to local government and the impact on public services that people valued;
- That the impact of cuts over 14 years could be seen in neighbourhoods and to welcome the decision to establish the Neighbourhood Infrastructure and Renewal Fund;
- Praise for the Executive and officers who had made difficult decisions which had meant that Manchester was not in the position that some local authorities were and welcoming that the city was continuing to invest to achieve its goals; and
- How the Council ensured that the most vulnerable people in the city continued to receive the support they needed when budget decisions were made.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources reported that the Council had worked to protect the most vulnerable residents over 14 years of cuts and would continue to do so. He advised that the Council had invested in early help and preventative work to reduce demand; however, he reported that there was still a high level of demand and that the crisis in the NHS and adult social care, as well as private sector profiteering in relation to children's placements, presented ongoing challenges. He reported that the Neighbourhood Infrastructure and Renewal Fund would continue for a further two years.

Decision:

To note the forecast medium term revenue budget.

ERSC/24/11 Growth and Development Budget Proposals

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director (Growth and Development) which provided a further update on the priorities for the services in the remit of this Committee and detailed the changes to the initial revenue budget options proposed by officers in November 2023. The Committee was invited to consider the proposed budget changes that were within its remit and to make recommendations to the Executive before it agreed to the final budget proposals on 14 February 2024.

Key points and themes within this report included:

- Service overview and priorities;
- Service budget and proposed changes;
- Commissioning and procurement priorities;

- Workforce implications;
- Equality and anti-poverty impact; and
- Future opportunities, risks and policy considerations.

The Executive Member for Housing and Development supported the earlier comments about the impact of Government cuts on local government, including on areas like Growth and Development. He reported that this was an area which brought funding into the Council and supported the Council's strategic objectives, highlighting new social housing, investment in Extra Care and accommodation for Looked After Children. He praised the work of officers in bringing in as much external funding as possible to support this work.

The Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure drew Members' attention to the areas of the report within his portfolio, in relation to Work and Skills, the Manchester Adult Education Service (MAES) and digital inclusion. In particular, he highlighted the emerging budget pressure on MAES from increased costs, stating a commitment to continue to provide the existing service and to seek options to mitigate these pressures in future. In response to earlier comments, he stated that, while the Council had worked hard to mitigate the impact of Government cuts on Manchester residents, the cuts had had an impact on residents and the Council was not able to provide all the services it would want to.

The Chair emphasised the importance of protecting MAES from service reductions, advising that this was an example of investing to save as it equipped people with the skills to contribute to the economy and reduced service demand in other areas. Noting the reference in the report to future pressures from the legislative changes in building safety requirements, he recommended that the Committee receive a report on this in the next municipal year.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Director of Highways reported that penalty charge notices for parking contraventions were set out in statute and that the Council did not have the power to increase the level of the charge. In response to a further question, he confirmed that the Council did have powers to increase parking fees. The Head of Finance (Corporate Core) reported that the recommendation that Highways external charges be increased by up to 5% related to a range of income streams within Highways which the Council was able to control. In response to a further question from the Chair about why these were not being increased by the average rate of inflation of 8%, he reported that 8% was the average rate of inflation over the last 12 months but that the forecast figure for 2024/25 was lower and that, in setting the level of the increase, consideration had been given to both the Council's financial position and protecting residents and businesses from increased costs.

In response to a Member's question about the Government's plans on the sale of council assets, the Executive Member for Finance and Resources reported that this related to councils which were in serious financial difficulties and that Manchester was in a stronger position. He informed Members about the role of the city's Strategic Asset Management Board, which looked at Council land or premises that were not in use and identified the best option for them. The Executive Member for Housing and Development provided further information on this, outlining some of the options that could be considered for the land, such as social and affordable housing,

schools and other facilities and, where land was sold, reinvesting the income in providing more affordable housing.

The Strategic Director (Growth and Development) reported that, unlike some local authorities, the Council had not acquired assets elsewhere to generate revenue and that the Council was not concerned by the recent Government announcement on the sale of council assets. She reported that the Council did have land assets within the city, some of which were part of the commercial and investment estate and generated income and others which were used as levers to shape the development of the city.

Decisions:

1. To note the proposed changes which are relevant to the Committee's remit.
2. To receive a report on the legislative changes in building safety requirements in the next municipal year.

ERSC/24/12 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.

Decision:

That the Committee note the report and agree the work programme.

Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 6 February 2024

Present:

Councillor Hitchen (Chair) – in the Chair

Councillors Azra Ali, Appleby, Doswell, Ogunbambo, Rawson, Priest, Sheikh and Wills

Also present:

Councillor Midgley, Deputy Leader

Councillor Akbar, Executive Member for Housing and Development

Councillor Hacking, Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure

Karin Connell, Strategic Lead: Health Equity and Inclusion, Manchester Integrated Care Partnership

Eamonn O'Rourke, Interim Chief Executive Officer, Manchester Active

Anne Marie Errock, Business Development Lead, Manchester Active

Apologies: Councillor Good

CESC/24/8 Interests

Councillor Ogunbambo declared a personal interest in item 7.

CESC/24/9 Minutes

Decision: That the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 9 January 2024, be approved as a correct record.

CESC/24/10 Annual Public Sector Equality Duty Report 2023/24

The committee considered a report of the Joint Director of Equality, Inclusion and Engagement which provided the draft Public Sector Equality Duty report prior to publication in March 2024 and provided an overview of the requirement for Manchester City Council to publish this.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- The Council's 3 Equality Objectives for 2020-2024;
 - Knowing Manchester Better
 - Improving Life Chances
 - Celebrating Our Diversity
- Progress made against these objectives through leadership and accountability' systems and structures; governance and reporting; people, culture and behaviours; digital, knowledge and insight; and measures and motivators;
- The need for an intersectional approach to analysing and acting upon data;
- Previous reports to the committee on Communities of Identity and the LGBTQIA+ Deep Dive;

- How the Council's equality objectives and plans were governed through the Corporate Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Leadership Group; and
- The work of Making Manchester Fairer and Community Health Equity Manchester (CHEM).

Some of the key points and queries that arose from the committee's discussion included:

- Requesting clarification on statistics in the report relating to the percentage of households with at least one person who can speak English as their main language and the LGBT+ population in Manchester;
- The need for tangible case studies of how barriers were being tackled with marginalised groups such as black, Asian and minority ethnicities (BAME) and disabled people; and
- Welcoming the recognition of those experiencing homelessness, carers, care leavers, armed forces personnel and those living in poverty.

The Strategic Lead: Health Equity and Inclusion, Manchester Integrated Care Partnership, stated that the report provided an overview of what had been delivered by the Council and other stakeholders against the statutory equality duties. She highlighted how equality, diversity and inclusion had been embedded across the Council's work. She stated that good progress had been made and recognised that there was a scale and need that would be set out in new equality objectives for 2024-2028 to provide greater focus.

The Chair invited a member of the public to make representations to the committee. The member of the public requested clarification on how structural policies, processes and procedures that excluded sexual orientation and gender identity or expression, and that denies a person's identity, would be dismantled and where responsibility lay for compliance to the Public Sector Equality Duty when Council services were contracted out, with particular reference to GLL. They also highlighted the importance of wording, definitions, data integrity and monitoring. A full response would be provided outside of the meeting.

In response to a point raised by the Chair regarding statistics in the report, members were advised that this should read that English was not the main language for 97,192 residents. Of these, 75,760 (77.9%) could speak English well or very well, and 21,432 (22.1%) said they cannot. Further clarification on the LGBT+ population would be provided following the meeting.

The Strategic Lead: Health Equity and Inclusion, Manchester Integrated Care Partnership, stated that the Census was a useful source of information but that it had drawbacks. She highlighted that responses to some questions were not mandatory and that the Census took place at a time when students were not in the city. She stated that approximately 30,000 people were thought to be missing from the Census and commented that deep dives, like what the committee had recently undertaken into the LGBTQ+ community in Manchester, were useful in providing insights and lived experiences that the Census could not highlight.

In response to a query regarding case studies, the committee was informed that the report referred to the work of Making Manchester Fairer (MMF) and Community Health Equity Manchester (CHEM). The Strategic Lead: Health Equity and Inclusion, Manchester Integrated Care Partnership explained that Sounding Boards with BAME and disabled representatives had been established through CHEM to feed into programmes of work where inequalities of access, experiences and outcomes existed. It was stated that examples of the work of Sounding Boards could be shared with the committee.

Decision:

That the committee

1. notes the report, and
2. looks forward to receiving a further update on progress against the equality objectives in the new municipal year.

CESC/24/11 Draft Equality Objectives 2024-2028

The committee considered a report of the Joint Director of Equality, Inclusion and Engagement which provided an overview of the approach to developing the Council's refreshed Equality Objectives for 2024-2028.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background to the Council's existing Equality Objectives for 2020-2024;
- How the Council meets its statutory equality duties;
- The approach to refreshing the Equality Objectives through building on and strengthening existing strategies, successes and other work;
- Progress made against current objectives;
- Rationale and associated actions for each proposed Equality Objectives for 2024-2028, which were:
 - Promoting inclusive employment and work
 - Promoting timely and proportionate community involvement and engagement
 - Delivering inclusive and accessible services.
- How these objectives would be delivered and monitored; and
- Next steps and timeline for the publication of the 2024-2028 Equality Objectives.

Some of the key points and queries that arose from the committee's discussion included:

- Welcoming the proposed new equality objectives;
- How the Council worked to foster good relations between those who shared protected characteristics and those who did not;

- How success would be measured, and requesting that the delivery plan be provided to a future meeting;
- Suggesting that the Council only enter into contracts with companies that share similar equality values or who sign up to the Council's equality objectives;
- When the socioeconomic disadvantage duty would be adopted by the Council;
- How success in reducing socioeconomic disadvantage would be measured and monitored;
- Welcoming plans for community engagement on the draft equality objectives;
- How trauma-informed work would be integrated with the objectives;
- How social mobility work could be embedded in North Manchester;
- Requesting statistics on the percentage of school leavers who were in care and were not in further or higher education, employment, or training 9 months after leaving school;
- The need to consider poverty and class, which were not mentioned in the report despite poverty cutting across many different characteristics and restricting access to employment; and
- When a further update could be provided to the committee.

The Head of Equalities stated that a whole-systems approach would be taken to developing the new equality objectives and that these would ensure that equalities were embedded in all strategic drivers across the Council. She stated that an intersectional approach would also be taken as the Council understood the layers of disadvantage within different groups and communities. The new equality objectives would build on the current three objectives to recognise successes and feedback from residents. She advised that the objectives would be strategically aligned and would reflect the commitments of the Making Manchester Fairer (MMF) programme, the Workforce Equality Strategy and the Work and Skills Strategy. Members were advised that the engagement process would expand on previous public engagement and to reach key communities.

The Head of Equalities explained that the draft equality objectives included inclusive employment and work; timely and proportionate community involvement and engagement; and delivering inclusive and accessible services. She stated that there would be a significant focus on metrics and measurements and a delivery plan was being developed.

The Head of Equalities advised that work to foster good relations between those with protected characteristics and those without had started under the current equality objectives. An example of this was the Council's involvement in and support of events which celebrated diversity and built awareness of different cultures in the city, such as Manchester Pride, Holocaust Memorial Day and Walk for Women. She stated that this would be continued under the new equality objectives to continue building good relations between different groups.

The Deputy Leader also stated that this work could link with the Community Cohesion Strategy to foster good relations and she recognised the need for this work to be cross-cutting across many Council services.

In response to a query regarding how success would be measured, the committee was advised that this could be undertaken through the equality impact assessment process. The Head of Equalities explained that the delivery plan was expected to be finalised in late March and this could be shared with the committee at a future meeting.

A member's suggestion that the Council only enter into contracts with companies that share similar equality values or who sign up to the Council's equality objectives was noted by officers.

The Head of Equalities acknowledged a member's point regarding integrating trauma-informed work into the equality objectives and explained that work was ongoing with the Human Resources and Organisation Development (HROD) team to create a learning and development programme across the wider equalities work and it was important to reference trauma-informed work and cultural humility within this.

In response to queries regarding socioeconomic disadvantage, the committee was advised that this would be addressed by building a culture of understanding around the disadvantages that different communities faced. Members were also informed that the Council's equality impact assessment process had been refreshed to have a greater focus on data and those involved in new policies or developments would need to be mindful of the local community and any disparities that residents may experience. The Strategic Lead: Health Equity and Inclusion, Manchester Integrated Care Partnership, stated that socioeconomic disadvantage in Manchester was one of the driving forces behind selecting employment as an equality objective as this was critical to addressing some of the issues caused by poor social mobility. She advised that there was substantial data around employment status and economic inactivity which could be broken down by locality and compared by ethnicity and disability. This was addressed within the Council's Work and Skills Strategy and provided an example of work with Bangladeshi women in Cheetham, Crumpsall and Longsight.

Officers acknowledged a point raised by the Chair regarding the need to consider poverty and class as a barrier to employment and social mobility and they endeavoured to look into incorporating this into the objectives and delivery plan.

In response to a query regarding how the committee could continue to monitor progress with this work, officers explained that a working group would be established to develop metrics and identify the best way to demonstrate the impact of this work. The City Solicitor suggested that June 2024 would be an appropriate time to provide an update, which the committee welcomed.

Decision:

That the committee

1. notes the report;
2. requests that a progress update be provided to the committee in June 2024, including the delivery plan; information on how success would be monitored; and information on the socioeconomic disadvantage duty;
3. requests further updates on a 6-month basis after June 2024;
4. requests further information on the percentage of school leavers in Manchester who were in care and were not in further or higher education, employment, or training 9 months after leaving school; and
5. recommends that further consideration be given to including poverty as a protected characteristic within the equality objectives.

CESC/24/11 Manchester's Sport and Physical Activity Strategy Annual Update

The committee considered a report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) which highlighted the annual progress made by Manchester Active in the development and achievement of the Manchester Sport and Physical Activity Strategy. It also provided an overview of the progress made using sport and physical activity to enable Manchester residents to be healthier and happier.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background to Manchester Active and the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy;
- The Strategy's vision, priority themes and enabling themes;
- Updates on walking and cycling;
- The Physical Activity Referral Service (PARS);
- Facilities and opportunities for young people and Holiday Activity Funding (HAF);
- Major sporting events held and scheduled to be held in Manchester;
- How residents are informed about sport, physical activity and health;
- An overview of completed projects that created new or improved existing built sports facilities; and
- Next steps.

Some of the key points and queries that arose from the committee's discussion included:

- Welcoming the promotional video and querying whether this could be displayed on advertising boards across the city;
- Highlighting positive developments in Withington parks and at Hough End Leisure Centre and House of Sport;
- The role of Neighbourhood Sports Officers;

- Noting statistics that 32% of children in Greater Manchester were inactive, and querying whether this included PE lessons in schools;
- What activities were offered to motivate and increase participation among children and young people;
- Take-up rates for free swimming;
- Whether free swimming was still offered to those aged over 60;
- Whether there would be any additional place-based activities offered through the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme;
- The impact on HAF if the government did not continue to provide the Household Support Fund (HSF); and
- How the Council and Manchester Active could improve access to sports and leisure facilities for those least able to afford it.

The Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure stated that Manchester Active played a strong and vital role in local communities and neighbourhoods in supporting the economy, reconnecting communities and rebuilding a stronger society that enabled residents to be healthier and happier. He stated that 2023 was a landmark year for sport, physical health and activity in Manchester with over 25 major events held in the city. He commented that UK Sport would be providing £1.1m to the city and that Manchester retained its status as a global city of sport which would inspire positive change and ensure a legacy pathway for Manchester athletes to excel. He highlighted how the city had been named European Capital of Cycling for 2024, which would be a strong platform to secure additional funding and investment into cycling provision. The committee was also advised that over 20,000 children benefitted from the free Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme which delivered 150,000 meals. He also highlighted several other achievements.

The Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure acknowledged some challenges and areas for improvement, such as strengthening the digital platform to enable residents to find and easily access activity opportunities. He stated that activities to encourage residents to lead more active lifestyles would be intensified and that work would be undertaken to grow and enhance local health networks.

The committee also received a video presentation of Manchester Active's work and key achievements. In response to a question from the Chair regarding whether this could be presented on advertising boards across the city, the Interim Chief Executive Officer, Manchester Active, stated that a digital campaign was being developed with partners and that snippets of the video could be included in this.

The Interim Chief Executive Officer, Manchester Active acknowledged challenges with inactivity amongst children and noted that PE was not always followed through in the school curriculum. He stated that the HAF programme created a platform for children during school holidays to learn about activity. He advised that Manchester Active worked closely with other organisations to ensure that issues with inactivity were addressed in partnership and that there were also targeted activities in more deprived areas through Making Manchester Fairer and the Winning Hearts and Minds programme.

The Interim Lead for Leisure, Events and Specialist Markets recognised national and local gaps in activity amongst children and young people and stated that the Council and Manchester Active had increased the number of place-based initiatives and commitments. She commented that many local authorities no longer offered free swimming and that Manchester was proud to have retained this. The committee was advised that a successful marketing campaign had been undertaken to raise awareness of this offer and that subsidised swimming courses were also offered. The Interim Lead for Leisure, Events and Specialist Markets also highlighted how the Council extended the government's funding towards HAF to provide the scheme in every school holiday, which not every local authority did.

The Interim Lead for Leisure, Events and Specialist Markets acknowledged a focus on girls arising from the Active Lives Survey and explained that work was undertaken with stakeholders, such as schools and sports clubs, to address stereotypes and to keep up to date with new and emerging sports.

It was also confirmed that free swimming was offered to people under 16s and over 60s.

The Interim Chief Executive Officer, Manchester Active explained that Manchester received £4.1m in funding for HAF, which was targeted through free school meals. He stated that this was delivered in collaboration with a number of partners in a range of locations across the city. He stated that the Council and Manchester Active had influence over where partners delivered activities and he endeavoured to work with the member for Higher Blackley regarding activities in his ward.

The committee was informed that the Household Support Fund had not been confirmed for 2025/26 and that this would be a significant loss to the Council and Manchester Active if not continued by the government. Assurances were provided, however, that Manchester Active would work with partners to ensure sustainability and would seek further funding streams to support the HAF scheme.

The Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure stated that inability to afford access to sport and physical activity programmes was the fault of the government as a result of 14 years of austerity.

The Interim Chief Executive Officer, Manchester Active stated that his organisation focused on how to impact areas where residents could not afford to access sport and leisure facilities. He cited the Winning Hearts and Minds programme in North Manchester as an example of free, targeted work with families who were unable to access sport and physical activities. He recognised that organisations needed to provide local communities with low-cost options and that Manchester Active could support and provide pathways for residents to access these. He gave an example of work with Sport England to provide approximately £83k to community sports clubs which could be used for equipment, maintenance and running free trials of activities for women and girls.

He also stated that the HAF programme enabled engagement with children and to create habits amongst them that could be continued. This work included providing healthy, low-cost recipes which could help to reduce reliance on cheaper, less healthy food. The Interim Chief Executive Officer, Manchester Active also explained that the HAF programme allowed organisations to gather information on where service users lived so that more targeted work could be undertaken. He explained that work was underway with FC United on a place-based, low-cost opportunity in Moston to support the Winning Hearts and Minds programme and that similar work was ongoing at Station South.

The Interim Lead for Leisure, Events and Specialist Markets acknowledged that the cost-of-living crisis had intensified inequalities across the city and explained that the consultation initially undertaken when developing the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy indicated that residents wanted free or low-cost activities. She stated that efforts to encourage walking and cycling would be intensified this year.

In response to a request from the Chair regarding bike libraries, the Interim Lead for Leisure, Events and Specialist Markets explained that a dedicated website for the European Capital of Cycling was now live and included information on where cycle libraries would be located.

Decision:

That the committee

1. notes the report, and
2. requests that the Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure writes to the government to emphasise the importance of the Household Support Fund (HSF) in supporting the Council's Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme and to request that HSF be continued after 2024/25; and
3. requests that an update be provided on the timescale for rolling out bike libraries across the city.

CEESC/24/12 Community Events Fund 2023/24

The committee considered a report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) which provided an overview of the purpose of the Council's Community Events Fund (CEF) and included details on how it is administered, and an outline of events funded in the 2023-24 financial year.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background to community events;
- Criteria for receiving CEF;
- CEF was split into a Restricted Fund, for recurring and targeted annual events, and an Unrestricted Fund, which provided grants to support groups through the application process;

- An overview of each event in receipt of CEF, including how much funding was awarded;
- The community reach of the Caribbean Carnival, GobeFest, MACFEST and South Asian Heritage Month events, as previously requested by the Committee;
- Challenges currently facing the events sector; and
- Considerations that may influence the Council's approach to future funding for community events.

Some of the key points and queries that arose from the committee's discussion included:

- Why the Diwali Mela event did not meet the criteria for CEF;
- How the Council encouraged new groups to organise events and apply for CEF;
- Why a budget had been assigned to the Irish Festival when the total event budget and the CEF application request were still to be confirmed;
- What support and feedback was provided to organisations whose applications were rejected to help them improve future bids;
- Whether commitment was sought from major event holders such as Wythenshawe Games and Parklife Festival to provide funding for smaller community events;
- Welcoming the funding for the Wythenshawe Games, and querying whether this was a one-time grant or if it would be maintained year-on-year;
- Whether privately funded events gave the Council less leverage over and input into how parks and open spaces were used;
- How small events could be grown and encouraged whilst maintaining capacity for funding; and
- If the Council's Events team offered apprenticeships.

The Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure explained that the report focused on the Community Events Fund (CEF) and that it also highlighted the challenges faced by the events sector and how CEF had been allocated in 2023/24. He explained that a review of applications for 2024/25 was underway and that it would be interesting to see what would be brought forward by communities. He recognised that the level of funding available would be unable to support all applications and that the Council continued to develop commercial opportunities in parks and open spaces that would create additional funding streams to ensure the continued delivery of a vibrant community events programme.

In response to a query regarding the Diwali Mela, the Head of Events Development explained that this event could not take place due to operational issues and that some funding from 2023/24 had been carried over. This was accounted for in the service's budget to ensure that the Mela would be financially stable if it was able to operate again in future years.

The Director of Neighbourhood Delivery stated that the Council recognised the fantastic work undertaken by community groups and stated that many events were held independently of the Council. He explained that many community groups sought support and guidance on organising events in their local neighbourhoods and that queries regarding more major events were directed to the central Events teams. He also advised that there was further information and guidance for community groups on the Council's website.

The Head of Events Development explained that work was still ongoing to organise the Irish Festival in collaboration with the Irish Heritage Centre. This event would include a parade and the Council was working with organisers on cultural content for this. He stated that the financial and budgetary implications of this were still being worked through.

In response to a query regarding what feedback was provided when applications were declined, the Head of Events Development explained that three applications were declined in 2023/24 but the Diwali Mela was expected to return. He stated that, of the other two applications, one did not meet the criteria for CEF, but officers would work with the applicant to discuss how a future application could be strengthened. It was also explained that the Northern Fashion Week event did not meet the criteria for CEF as it was a large-scale event in a commercial venue.

The Interim Lead for Leisure, Events and Specialist Markets highlighted other funding sources for events such as the Neighbourhood Investment Fund. She also advised that the Parks Strategy included the commerciality of events held in parks, which was ringfenced for reinvestment. She acknowledged that inflationary costs had increased but that the Council was maintaining its revenue position and being innovative with its income generation.

It was also confirmed that there was a commitment within the service's budget to maintain funding for the Wythenshawe Games.

In response to a query regarding privately funded events and the Council's influence over these, the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) commented that the Council had ultimate decision-making power over how parks were used and, in consultation with ward members, it could reject applications to use parks if felt unfavourable.

The Director of Neighbourhood Delivery explained that the Council would help to encourage and grow small events by working with partners, housing providers and organisations to support community groups and provide advice. He explained that the CEF was largely focused on events with a broad scope.

In closing the item, the Chair thanked officers for the help and guidance they provided to communities in organising events across the city.

Decision:

That the committee

1. notes the report, and
2. requests further information on whether apprenticeships were offered within the Events service.

CESC/24/13 2024/25 Budget

In opening the item, the Chair informed the committee that items 9 and 9a would be considered together and the committee considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer which provided an overview of the Council's updated budget position for 2024/25 and a report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) which provided a further update on the priorities for the services in the remit of this committee and detailed changes to the initial revenue budget options proposed by officers in November 2023.

Key points and themes within the reports included:

- Changes to the Council's budget position following the Autumn Statement and Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement;
- After the application of approved and planned savings, and the use of c.£17m smoothing reserves in each of the three years, the budget is balanced for 2024/25 with a budget gap of £29m in 2025/26 and £41m by 2026/27. This position assumed that savings of £21.4m would be delivered next year;
- Actions totalling £15m, to ensure that the Council had a balanced budget for 2024/25;
- Highlighting that the Council had undertaken careful long-term financial planning which involved making some difficult decisions around cost reduction and doing things differently but that a significant and growing budget gap remained from 2025/26;
- Full analysis and results of the public consultation would be reported to the Budget Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee meeting in late February;
- Next steps in the budget process;
- Providing an overview and information on the priorities of the Neighbourhoods directorate;
- The services under the remit of this committee;
- The base budgets for each service area for 2023/24;
- Noting that a temporary reduction in the annual £40k contribution to the security measures for the Christmas Markets whilst Albert Square is unavailable would be re-introduced once the markets return to Albert Square;
- The proposal to reduce the book fund budget by £30k had been removed following the committee's feedback in November 2023;
- An annual £2m contribution from the Capital Fund would be used to support the events commission and funded through the growth in retained business rates;
- Government grants and the income they provide;

- Workforce implications;
- Future opportunities;
- The indicative medium-term budgets by service area;
- The indicative medium-term budgets by type of spend/income; and
- A breakdown of the Community Safety budget, as previously requested by the Committee.

Some of the key points and queries that arose from the committee's discussion included:

- Commending the work of officers in setting a balanced budget for 2024/25;
- Expressing concern over the uncertainty of the continuation of the Household Support Fund from government;
- Welcoming the withdrawal of a previous proposal to reduce the book fund budget by £30k;
- Expressing concern over funding for homelessness prevention and support and recognising how central government failed to provide appropriate funding for areas most in need, like Manchester;
- Recognising that households in Manchester were still feeling the impacts of the cost-of-living crisis;
- How the Council would reassure residents that there would not be cuts to vital services, particularly for those most vulnerable;
- Expressing thanks to officers within the Homelessness service for their work in reducing the use of bed and breakfasts as temporary accommodation; and
- Recognising that local councils provide a lifeline for residents.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources introduced the item and stated that the Government's approach to the Local Government Finance Settlement had been chaotic and only announced just before Christmas. He said the final announcement when announced had resulted in a cut of 84% in the Services Grant and this equated to a £6.1m loss for Manchester. He stated that this had resulted in an outcry from local authorities and MPs from all political parties. He stated that this situation needed to be understood in the context of fourteen years of austerity and Government funding cuts and unfunded pressures such as inflation and population growth.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources added that the Government then swiftly announced an additional £500m for Social Care, however Local Authorities were still facing a £4bn budget gap nationally, resulting in a number of Local Authorities serving a Section 144 notice and it was anticipated that more would follow.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources commented that despite this Manchester had set a balanced budget and had been achieved through diligent planning and management that had witnessed the strategic investment in preventative initiatives; using financial reserves prudently and investment in activities that were important for Manchester residents.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources stated that although Manchester had been able to deliver a balanced budget this year, the Council's financial position is expected to become even more challenging. The projected budget gap, even after using reserves for 25/26 was £29m in 2025/26 and rising to £41m by 2026/27.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources concluded by stating that the Government had continually failed to listen to Local Authorities.

The Deputy Leader stated that significant work had been undertaken to reduce the use and costs of bed and breakfasts as temporary accommodation for those experiencing homelessness and that officers were looking at other ways to reduce costs within the service. She highlighted that budgetary pressures were a result of political choices at a national level, such as Section 21 eviction notices, and increased demand as a result of the asylum and refugee crisis, which the government had failed to provide adequate funding to address. She called on the government to provide adequate financial support to local authorities to tackle homelessness.

The Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure also confirmed that a previous proposal to withdraw the book fund budget by £30k had been withdrawn, following expressions of concern from committee members' in November.

In response to a query, the Executive Member for Finance and Resources explained that the revenue budget gap for social care and homelessness had increased since 2010. He recognised that it was impossible to protect and mitigate all services and that the government had changed the funding formula to benefit more affluent areas.

Much of the committee's discussion focused on the failure of government to provide adequate funding for authorities like Manchester. The Chair particularly expressed concern over budgetary challenges within the Homelessness service and stated that it was a fundamental right for people to have a place to live. She expressed disappointment that the current Conservative government prioritised funding for more affluent areas and called for an immediate general election.

In closing the item, the Chair asked officers to convey the committee's gratitude to all Council staff for their work in delivering a balanced budget.

Decision:

That the report be noted.

CESC/24/14 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.

Decision:

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

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2024

Present:

Councillor Reid – in the Chair

Councillors N Ali, Alijah, Amin, Gartside, Hewitson, Lovecy, Ludford, McHale, Marsh, and Nunney

Co-opted Voting Members:

Mr G Cleworth, Parent Governor Representative

Ms S Davies, Parent Governor Representative

Canon S Mapledoram, Representative of the Diocese of Manchester

Mr Y Yonis, Parent Governor Representative

Also present:

Councillor Akbar, Executive Member for Finance and Resources

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

Apologies:

Councillors Fletcher and Judge

CYP/24/08 Minutes

Decision

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 10 January 2024.

CYP/24/09 Revenue Budget Update 2024/25

The Committee received a report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer which provided a high-level overview of the updated budget position. It set out the latest forecast revenue budget position, and the next steps. Following the Provisional Finance Settlement announced on 18 December 2023, the Council was forecasting an estimated budget shortfall of £38m in 2024/25, £79m in 2025/26, and £90m by 2026/27. After the application of approved and planned savings, and the use of c.£17m smoothing reserves in each of the three years, the budget was balanced for 2024/25 and the remaining gap reduced to £29m in 2025/26 and £41m by 2026/27. This position assumed that savings of £21.4m were delivered next year.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Changes to the budget position;
- Summary budget position;
- Budget consultation;
- Equalities impact and anti-poverty assessments;
- Scrutiny of the draft proposals and the budget reports; and
- Next steps.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources stated that the Government's approach to the Local Government Settlement had been chaotic and only announced just before Christmas. He reported that the final announcement had resulted in a cut of 84% in the Services Grant and that this equated to a £6.1m cut for Manchester. He stated that this had resulted in an outcry from local authorities and MPs from all political parties. He stated that this situation needed to be understood in the context of 14 years of austerity and Government funding cuts and unfunded pressures such as inflation and population growth.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources added that the Government had then announced an additional £500m for Social Care; however, local authorities were still facing a £4bn budget gap nationally, resulting in a number of local authorities serving a Section 144 notice and it was anticipated that more would follow.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources commented that, despite this, Manchester had set a balanced budget and this had been achieved through diligent planning and management that had seen strategic investment in preventative initiatives; using financial reserves prudently and investment in activities that were important for Manchester residents, such as libraries; leisure centres, highways, parks and green spaces and reducing the carbon footprint.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources stated that although Manchester had been able to deliver a balanced budget this year, the Council's financial position was expected to become even more challenging. The projected budget gap, even after using reserves for 25/26, was £29m in 2025/26 and £41m in 2026/27. He expressed concern that the Government had continually failed to listen to local authorities.

Decision

To note the forecast medium term revenue budget.

CYP/24/10 Children and Education Services Budget 2024/25

The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director (Children and Education Services) which provided a further update on the priorities for the services in the remit of this Committee and detailed the changes to the initial revenue budget options proposed by officers in November 2023. The Committee was invited to consider the proposed budget changes that were within its remit and to make recommendations to the Executive before it agreed to the final budget proposals on 14 February 2024.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Service overview and priorities;
- Service budget and proposed changes;
- Workforce implications; and
- Use of reserves and grants.

The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People reported that the Council had been in a difficult financial position for the last 14 years due to Government cuts but had continued to prioritise children and had invested in a range of successful innovations, such as Early Help and Edge of Care services. He informed Members that, excepting Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children, the number of Looked After Children in Manchester had decreased, which was contrary to the national trend and demonstrated the success of early intervention, providing support to families so that more children could safely remain with their families. He expressed concern about profiteering in the private placement sector and about the impact of the withdrawal of the Household Support Fund. He stated that the Council would continue to invest in Children's Services, highlighting investment in a range of areas including Youth Services, Sure Start and work to become a Child Friendly City.

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

- To thank officers for their work in making the most of the funding available to support children and families, in the face of continuing Government cuts, which restricted what could be done;
- To support the continuing use of the early intervention approach which had worked successfully over recent years;
- Concern about the challenges facing families, including increased use of Section 21 eviction notices and the removal of the Holiday Activity Fund, and the increased pressures on schools in trying to support these families; and
- The importance of providing Home To School transport for children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and to ask for further information on the proposals for the service, including the new route planning software.

The Strategic Director (Children and Education Services) reported that, while the Council and its partners, including schools and health partners, were all facing challenges, they were continuing to focus on partnership working to support children and families. He informed Members about the refresh of the Children and Young People's Plan, one key area of which would be poverty. He advised that there was a focus on getting the maximum amount of impact and efficiency from services, rather than reducing services.

The Director of Education reported that an additional £3.9 million was being invested in Home To School Transport over the next three years, in recognition of the growing demand for the service and increased pressures; however, she advised that the Council was seeking to make the service more efficient, through route planning software and commissioning. She reported that route planning had previously been carried out manually by staff but that the software would enable more efficient routes to be identified and for buses to be fully utilised. She also highlighted the new policy which had been introduced the previous year, and which had been considered by the Committee at that time, which included a range of other options for eligible children, such as a personal budget for the family to use to arrange transport. She informed Members about an audit tool that was being developed to help schools to poverty-proof the school day and suggested that the Committee could receive a report on the work taking place at a future meeting.

The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People reported that the increasing cost of Home To School transport was a serious problem for local authorities across the country but that the Council had invested in this area and worked across different departments, including ICT and HR, to find solutions.

The Chair informed Members about the improvement journey that Children's Services had been on since 2014, when it had been judged to be inadequate by Ofsted. She highlighted that in 2010 the Council had lost 4000 staff due to the cuts to local government budgets. She praised the work that had taken place to get Children's Services to its current position, improving the lives of children and young people while also saving money, particularly through the implementation of new approaches to safely reduce the number of Looked After Children. However, she expressed concern that the ongoing cuts being imposed by the current Government were unsustainable.

Decision

To note the proposed changes which are relevant to the Committee's remit.

CYP/24/11 Dedicated Schools Grant 2024/25

The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director (Children and Education Services) which provided a summary of the confirmed DSG allocation from the 2024/25 settlement announced on 19 December 2024 and the budget allocation across individual school budgets and Council's retained schools budgets which was consulted and reported to Schools Forum on 15 January 2024.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Grant overview;
- Distribution across educational establishments and Council issues; and
- DSG medium term financial planning.

The Chair highlighted the pressure on the High Needs Block and reported that money was being recovered from some schools which had built up a large balance. She expressed concern about how some academy trusts managed their budgets. She informed Members that the provision of school buses was being reviewed.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Head of Finance (Children, Education and Schools) explained how the DSG from the Department for Education (DfE) was allocated, with most of it being distributed to schools, who were responsible for their own budgets, and a smaller amount being retained by the Council for the High Needs Block, which was distributed to schools during the year in relation to support for children with SEND. She reported that, following agreement from the Schools Forum, the approach to monitoring and recovering money from schools with surplus balances was being tightened up, with that money being used to address pressures in the High Needs Block.

The Director of Education reported that Early Years settings were also funded through the DSG and that this amount had increased due to the expanded entitlement to free childcare which was being introduced. The Chair expressed concern that the Early Years Block allocation from the DfE, as set out in table 5 of the report, was insufficient and that the sector would struggle to provide sufficiency of places when the entitlement was expanded. The Lead for Statutory Area (Early Years Access and Sufficiency) outlined some of the work the Council was doing to help the Early Years sector prepare for these changes. The Chair reported that sufficiency of places would be considered in a future Early Years report and she encouraged Members to monitor issues with this in their ward.

In relation to the High Needs Block, a Member informed the Committee about a recent visit that Members of the Ofsted Subgroup had undertaken to a new special school in the north of the city, where children were receiving the care and support they needed, and she highlighted the importance of ensuring that children with SEND were provided with the right support and environment, in specialist or mainstream provision, to enable them to achieve their potential. The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People suggested that the Committee receive a report on work taking place to provide better options for children with SEND, noting that for some children this would be in mainstream schools and that some children with more complex needs would require special school places. The Chair agreed to receive a report on this.

The Chair expressed concern that the Government was not covering the costs of the problems with Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) which some schools were facing. She also expressed concern about the condition of many primary school buildings, stating that investment was needed in new school buildings but that the Coalition Government had cancelled the Building Schools for the Future programme in 2010, with the Council managing to obtain sign-off on The Grange shortly before the programme was cancelled.

In response to the Chair's comments, the Director of Education reported that there had been one school in Manchester with RAAC but that there were other concerns about the condition of school buildings in the city. She drew Members' attention to a section in the previous report (Children and Education Services Budget 2024/25) regarding funding which had been allocated to complete condition surveys of local authority-maintained schools, advising that these would assist with bids for any relevant funding which became available and would also inform how the capital maintenance grant was allocated.

Decisions

1. To note the report.
2. To consider sufficiency of Early Years places in a future report.
3. To receive a report on work taking place to provide improved options, in both mainstream and special schools, for children with SEND.

CYP/24/12 Update on Progress of the Leaving Care Service

The Committee considered a report and presentation of the Strategic Director (Children and Education Services) which provided an update on Manchester's approach to supporting its Care Leavers.

Key points and themes in the report and presentation included:

- Demographic;
- Performance;
- Accommodation;
- Education, training and employment;
- Emotional, mental, physical and sexual health;
- Strengths and developments; and
- Next steps.

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

- To welcome the work being done, including the proactive approach, listening to the voices of young people and the level of contact with Care Leavers;
- Supporting young people with neuro-behavioural conditions, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) and trauma; and
- Adapting to the needs of unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people including friendships and community connections and noting that this group was predominantly male.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Strategic Director (Children and Education Services) explained how bringing the service in-house enabled the Council to shape the culture and behaviour of how the service was delivered, creating a culture which encouraged innovation, rather than just compliance. In response to a further question from the Chair about whether this could be run as a service which other local authorities could buy into, he reported that consideration was given to what could be exported. He informed Members that good practice and learning was shared through the Greater Manchester Care Leavers Trust Board.

The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People reported that a lot of work had taken place in relation to FASD, after this had been raised at previous Committee meetings, including the Director of Public Health setting up a roundtable on this issue, involving a wide range of partners.

The Deputy Strategic Director of Children's Services informed the Committee about the 'Beyond Psychology' trauma-informed practice training which all the service's Personal Advisors had undertaken. He reported that the service had been designed in a way which recognised the diverse impact of trauma and FASD on young people's lives and how the service could effectively engage with those young people.

The Assistant Director (Children in Care and Care Leavers) reported that it could be a long process for a neurodiverse young adult who had not been diagnosed in childhood to receive a diagnosis so her service was focusing on dealing with the

presenting behaviours and not delaying pathway planning while awaiting a diagnosis, being aspirational for each young person and understanding them as an individual. She outlined work with Youth Justice on the SHIFT programme and work which was taking place on transitional safeguarding to support young people who did not meet the criteria of the Care Act assessment. She reported that, following feedback from a young person, her service was looking into making the 'Beyond Psychology' training available to some older young people to help them understand their cognitive processes and self-help approaches.

In response to a Member's question on the Southwark Ruling, the Deputy Strategic Director of Children's Services reported that, while he did not have the exact figures to hand and would provide these after the meeting, the trend in Manchester had changed significantly in recent years from 80% of 16- and 17-year-olds who presented as homeless coming into care and 20% returning to their families to 20% coming into care and 80% returning to their families, due to a new approach to supporting and engaging with families.

In response to a question about Kinship Carers, the Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People suggested that the Committee might want to receive a report on this at a future meeting, to which the Chair agreed.

The Chair commented on the 13 young people who were in custody. She informed Members about a visit to Wetherby Young Offenders Institute which had taken place in conjunction with the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee. She expressed concern that Barton Moss Secure Children's Centre had not agreed for Members to visit.

The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People highlighted the positive work that the Youth Justice Service and SHIFT team were doing and suggested that the Committee might want to visit them in future.

The Assistant Director (Children in Care and Care Leavers) reported that the service had recruited a number of male Personal Advisers, who were able to provide male role models. She advised that the housing band one model had been expanded to include shared accommodation, which could be particularly useful for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people who had travelled together and lived together. She clarified that young people who had been the subject of Special Guardianship Order (SGO) or had been privately fostered were still classed as Care Leavers and that young people in this position were starting to be aware of the Leaving Care Service and approaching them for support. In response to a Member's question, she confirmed that the service wanted to diversify its Care Consultants and was doing targeted work to recruit Care Consultants who had been through the Youth Justice system and young people who were unaccompanied asylum-seekers. In response to a question from the Chair about 'suitable accommodation', she advised that unsuitable accommodation was defined by the Department for Education (DfE) as bed-and-breakfast accommodation or custody, stating that none of their young Care Leavers were in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. She informed Members about targeted work her service had been doing with HMP Hindley and Barton Moss Secure Children's Centre to support Manchester's young Care Leavers who were in custody.

In response to a Member's question about the cultural background of Care Leavers, the Strategic Director (Children and Education Services) drew Members' attention to the pie chart on ethnicity on the second page of the presentation and stated that additional information, such as religion, was also available. He assured Members that one of Children's Services' priorities was to be sensitive and responsive to children and young people's identity.

Decision

To receive a report on Kinship Carers at a future meeting.

CYP/24/13 Update on the Government's Strategy to Reform Children's Services (Stable Homes, Built on Love)

The Committee considered a report and presentation of the Strategic Director (Children and Education Services) which provided an overview of the Government's strategy for the reform of children's services and the implications for Manchester.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- The six strategic pillars of Stable Homes, Built on Love and the phased approach to reform;
- The National Kinship Care Strategy;
- The Children's Social Care National Framework;
- The multi-agency statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023; and
- The national digital and data strategy, which included a proposed National Children's Social Care Dashboard.

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

- Concern that there was no certainty of funding for these reforms;
- How much confidence was there that Manchester could implement these reforms on time;
- Kinship Carers and private fostering, including ensuring that families were getting the support they needed; and
- The selection of eight Local Authorities to take part in the Kinship Care pilots.

The Chair informed Members of the work of MP Andrew Gwynne on Kinship Carers. She highlighted the role of multi-agency working, including the police, in relation to complex safeguarding and informed Members about place-based multi-agency work in her ward to address complex safeguarding concerns.

In response to the Chair's comments, the Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People advised that Ward Councillors for an importance source of intelligence on what was happening in their ward and he encouraged Ward Councillors to share any concerns they had so that they could be addressed.

The Strategic Director (Children and Education Services) reported that, while the Council was still awaiting further details of the reforms from the Government, it had already invested in some of the key areas and would respond innovatively and creatively to meet these new challenges. He advised that the Council should be provided with funding from central Government for new burdens placed upon it. He reported that there had been no announcement from the DfE as yet on the eight Local Authorities which would participate in the Kinship Care pilots and that Manchester already paid its Kinship Carers comparable rates to Foster Carers.

The Head of Service Provider Services reported that approximately 20% of Looked After Children in Manchester lived with Kinship Carers, under the current definition of this term. She reported that 666 children were subject to Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) and 236 lived in kinship fostering arrangements. She outlined the support that was now available for Special Guardians including training, designated support groups and access to the Adoption Support Fund and highlighted the benefits for children of living with extended family. She reported that the disruption rate was lower for Kinship Carers and had decreased further as the support offer had been improved. She informed Members that the Council had achieved Fostering Friendly Status as an employer.

In response to comments from the Chair about having 'great' Social Workers, the Deputy Strategic Director of Children's Services suggested that the Committee receive a report on the updated Children's Services Workforce Development Strategy at a future meeting, to which the Chair agreed. The Chair reported that Members would be visiting frontline Social Workers to ensure that they had an accurate understanding of the situation.

Decisions

1. To note the report and seek further updates on progress for each specific area of reform, to be included in the Committee's work programme for 2024/25.
2. To receive a report on the updated Children's Services Workforce Development Strategy at a future meeting.

CYP/24/14 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.

A Member who was the Chair of the Ofsted Subgroup invited Committee Members to join the Subgroup.

Decision

To note the report and agree the work programme.

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Health Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2024

Present:

Councillor Green – in the Chair
Councillors Curley, Hilal, Karney and Wilson

Apologies: Councillor Bayunu, Cooley and Reeves

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
Councillor Akbar, Executive Member for Finance and Resources
Sir Richard Leese, Chair, NHS Greater Manchester Integrated Care
Tom Hinchcliffe, Deputy Place Based Lead for Health and Social Care Integration, NHS Greater Manchester Integrated Care
Morgan Tarr, Local Public Affairs Officer, North West, Marie Curie
Jackie Bell, Associate Director, Marie Curie
Elaine Parkin, Quality Improvement Programme Manager, Palliative & End of Life Care, NHS GM
Mark Edwards, Chief Operating Officer, MLCO
Dr Sarah Follon, Associate Medical Director, NHS GM (Manchester Locality Team)
Ian Moses, Senior Service Improvement Lead - Urgent and Emergency Care, Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership
Lorraine Cliff, Director of Performance, Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust
Sian Wimbury, Deputy Chief Operating Officer, Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust
Julia Bridgewater, Group Chief Operating Officer, Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust
Professor Matt Makin, Medical Director, North Manchester General Hospital

HSC/24/07 Minutes

Decisions

1. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 10 January 2024.
2. To receive the minutes of the Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust: Improvement Plan Task and Finish Group meeting held on 23 January 2024.

HSC/24/08 Revenue Budget Update 2024/25

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer that set out the latest forecast revenue budget position, and the next steps. Following the Provisional Finance Settlement announced 18 December 2023 the Council was forecasting an estimated budget shortfall of £38m in 2024/25, £79m in 2025/26, and £90m by 2026/27. After the application of approved and planned

savings, and the use of c.£17m smoothing reserves in each of the three years, the budget was balanced for 2024/25 and the remaining gap reduced to £29m in 2025/26 and £41m by 2026/27. This position assumed that savings of £21.4m were delivered next year.

This report provided a high-level overview of the updated budget position. Each scrutiny committee was invited to consider the current proposed changes which were within its remit and to make recommendations to the Executive before it agreed the final budget proposals on 14 February 2024.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources stated that the Government's approach to the Local Government Settlement had been chaotic and only announced just before Christmas. He said the final announcement when announced had resulted in a cut of 84% in the Services Grant and this equated to a £6.1m cut for Manchester. He stated that this had resulted in an outcry from Local Authorities and MPs from all political parties. He stated that this situation needed to be understood in the context of fourteen years of austerity and Government funding cuts and unfunded pressures such as inflation and population growth.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources added that the Government then swiftly announced an additional £500m for Social Care, however Local Authorities were still facing a £4bn budget gap nationally, resulting in a number of Local Authorities serving a Section 144 notice and it was anticipated that more would follow.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources commented that, despite this, Manchester had set a balanced budget and this had been achieved through diligent planning and management that had witnessed the strategic investment in preventative initiatives; using financial reserves prudently and investment in activities that were important for Manchester residents, such as libraries; leisure centres; parks and green spaces and the Climate Change Action Plan.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources stated that although Manchester had been able to deliver a balanced budget this year, the Council's financial position was expected to become even more challenging. The projected budget gap, even after using reserves for 25/26, was £29m in 2025/26 and rising to £41m by 2026/27, adding that since 2010 the Council has had to make £443m of savings.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources concluded by stating that the Government had continually failed to listen to Local Authorities.

The Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care made reference to the complexity of the budget arrangements, adding that a significant amount of funding were grants and one off funding arrangements which was totally impractical when attempting to plan and deliver important services. He stated that despite the budget cuts that had been imposed on the city, Manchester had continued to invest and plan services to support some of the most vulnerable residents, making particular reference to the Better Outcomes Better Lives transformation programme that was routinely reported to the Committee. He stated that he had continued to lobby the Government for adequate funding and reiterated

the importance of understanding the budget in terms of people and he called for a more sustainable and fair funding settlement for Manchester.

The Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care concluded by paying tribute to the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer, her deputy and the Head of Finance for their diligence when setting the budget. He also paid tribute to the finance team from the Local Care Organisation for their continued support.

Public Health Budget 2024/27

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Public Health that described the proposals for the Public Health budget for 2024/25 to 2026/27.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- An overview of Public Health services and key priorities;
- A detailed overview of the budget, noting that the gross 2023/24 budget detailed in the table below was £54.126m and the net budget of £43.266m. Income of £10.860m included use of reserves £3.753m, government grants £4.489m and other contributions from NHS partners, from other local authorities and Better Care Fund totalling £2.618m;
- The latest 2023/24 global monitoring report to the Executive outlined a £0.8m underspend. Savings of £0.730m had been achieved in full. There were underspends across the staffing budgets due to vacant posts and the maximisation of external funding, and underspends on other indirect staffing costs.
- There was a minor additional vacancy savings allocation of £0.015m for 2024/25;
- Planned non recurrent use of reserves in 2023/24 of £0.330m was replaced in 2024/25 with the planned use of headroom in the budget set aside for contract uplifts as detailed in the report to Health Scrutiny February 2023;
- Consideration of Growth and Pressures in 2024-2027, noting that no additional growth and pressures were approved for 2024-26;
- An update on Making Manchester Fairer (MMF); and
- Future opportunities, risks and policy considerations, noting that there was currently no further information on the Grant schemes income beyond 2024/25.

The Director of Public informed the Committee that the public health settlement had been received since the report had been submitted. He said that an additional £750k had been allocated, however whilst this was welcomed the budget remained under significant pressure.

Adults Social Care Budget 2024-27

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director of Adult Social Services that described the final proposals for the Adults Social Care (ASC) budget for 2024/25 to 2026/27.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- An overview of ASC services and key priorities and positioning within the Manchester Local Care Organisation;
- A detailed overview of the budget, noting that the gross 2023/24 budget was £285.023m and the net budget of £219.666m;
- Income of £65.357m included client fees £30.416m, Better Care Fund Grant £17.791m, contributions from NHS partners of £10.267m and other income of £6.883m which included grants and use of reserves. This included the integration reserve, which was drawn down in accordance with the plan agreed for the year with NHS Greater Manchester – Manchester locality;
- Growth and pressures in 2024-27;
- Confirmation of the Savings Plan 2024-26;
- An update to budget growth assumptions for the service as set out in the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP);
- Commissioning and procurement priorities;
- Workforce implications; and
- Future risks and opportunities including significant budget considerations in 2025/26.

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

- Paying tribute to the Executive and Senior Management Team for delivering a balanced budget;
- Stating that the Committee retained its full confidence in the Executive and the Senior Management Team;
- Thanking all staff working in the Public Health and Social Care teams, recognising the important work they delivered on behalf of Manchester residents;
- Recognising and welcoming that residents were central to all decisions taken;
- Calling on the Government to fund NHS Dentists to meet demand;
- Noting the importance of the many preventive interventions that public health delivered and the savings that this achieved in the longer term; and
- Noting the injustice of austerity and the disproportionate impact this had on the most deprived areas.

Decision

The Committee recommend that an extract of the budget discussion from the webcast of this meeting, along with vox pops of interviews with members of the public be sent to the Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer to support the call for fairer and sustainable funding for Manchester.

HSC/24/09 Progress Update on Winter 2023/24

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Place Based Lead and the Executive Director Adult Social Services that described the current progress in implementation of winter plans, and summary of pressures within the urgent care system.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Delivery of operational resilience across the NHS this winter, noting the four key areas of focus to help local systems prepare for winter;
- An update on the Urgent and Emergency Care Recovery Funds;
- Discussion of industrial action;
- Urgent Care Pressures and Urgent Care Performance;
- Information on the Greater Manchester System Control Centre (GM SCC);
- Organisational winter deliverables, by organisation, noting that the plans considered lessons learned from last winter, aligning with the system's urgent care recovery goals and with the core principle of working together as partners to keep people well at home; and
- Summary.

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

- Recognising and welcoming the partnership approach described;
- Welcoming that North Manchester General Hospital had recorded the best ambulance turnaround times in the country during November;
- Noting the important role that Community Pharmacies played to support residents especially with regard to flu vaccinations;
- Noting the reported low Covid-19 vaccination rates; and
- Requesting further information on Hospital at Home.

The Deputy Place Based Lead for Health and Social Care Integration, NHS Greater Manchester Integrated Care highlighted the whole system approach that was evidenced by the range of partners who were referenced throughout the report and present at the meeting. He stated that planning for this activity was ongoing and all opportunities for reflection and learning were utilised and shared.

The Director of Public Health referred to the discussion relating to flu and Covid vaccination rates by commenting that Covid vaccination rates had fallen, stating that this could be attributed to complacency and vaccination fatigue amongst the general population. He made reference to Manchester having strong vaccination coverage within its care home population. He stated that the key Public Health messaging around the importance of vaccinations was important, especially in regard to the issue of measles and referred to the national media coverage this had received following increased cases in the West Midlands.

The Group Chief Operating Officer, Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust reiterated and acknowledged the importance of system wide partnership working, adding that patient safety was everyone's responsibility. She further made reference to the importance of vaccinations, noting that flu admissions at the hospital had doubled in the last week. She said that all levers of influence and channels of communication should be utilised to articulate this important message.

The Chief Operating Officer, MLCO described that the Hospital at Home included virtual wards or other technology-enabled care at home, provided the care and treatment a person would expect in a hospital in the place they called home. The service brought together nurses, doctors and other health professionals to deliver the hospital care a person needed. It combined the latest health technology with the specialist knowledge of doctors and nurses working in the Greater

Manchester health and care system. The Medical Director, North Manchester General Hospital commented that this facility was strengthened and supported by shared electronic patient records and that all patients were clinically assessed to ensure this model of care was the most appropriate and this approach provided the patient with increased choice in their care.

Decision

To note the report.

HSC/24/10 End of Life Care

The Committee considered the report of the Manchester Deputy Place Lead and Marie Curie Lead that provided critical research from the *Better End of Life programme*, conducted in collaboration between Marie Curie, King's College London Cicely Saunders Institute, Hull York Medical School, the University of Hull and the University of Cambridge, in relation to experiences of palliative and end of life care, as well as identifying policies and resources that would help to make a positive difference to the lives of people affected by dying, death and bereavement.

Marie Curie had asked all localities to respond to an audit questionnaire and the findings from this were discussed in the body of this report and would inform locality developments.

In order to give a rounded perspective of issues and challenges across Manchester as well as the GM Integrated Care Board (ICB), contributions had also been collected from the GM Quality Improvement Programme Manager, Palliative & End of Life Care, who described the developments and ambitions of the GM Palliative and End of Life Care Programme, and the Manchester Locality Team, (Primary Care as well as Quality), where the issues and challenges in relation to transformation were discussed.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Discussion of Marie Curie's 'Better End of Life' programme; that included consideration of poverty, inequality and inequity; support for Carers; and bereavement support;
- Information regarding the UK Commission on Bereavement;
- Greater Manchester developments with reference to the Greater Manchester Palliative and End of Life Care Programme that had been established in 2013;
- Manchester developments, with reference to the Manchester Palliative and End of Life Care Partnership;
- Summary and next steps.

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

- Thanking the Chair of the Committee for bringing this important report to the Committee and having an opportunity to hear from partners;

- Recognising the importance of this subject area in the context of Manchester becoming an ACE-aware and Trauma Informed City;
- Discussing the cultural attitudes to death and dying and asking if there were examples of good practice that could be learnt from;
- Noting the significant issue of poverty and the impact this had on individuals and their families;
- Recognising the importance of carers and families;
- Noting that across the UK, over 40% of adults who wanted formal bereavement support didn't receive any and asking that any future update report include a breakdown of this figure by protected characteristic if available;
- Did the Council as an employer provide any bereavement support for staff;
- A network of Champions should be established to promote and support this work, including Council Directorate Champions with a single point of contact for residents to expedite any request for support;
- Information was sought in relation to Compassionate Communities;
- How was the voice and experience on citizens captured to inform this work;
- Supporting the identified priority to improve earlier identification in Primary Care; and
- What were the next steps.

The Local Public Affairs Officer, North West, Marie Curie made reference to the levels of unmet need, stating that this equated to 830 people in Manchester who were not receiving palliative care. He further discussed the issue of the number and proportion of working age people and pensioners dying in poverty, commenting that this was a significant issue for Manchester and would only be compounded by the continued cost of living crisis. He commented that the Council played an important role in addressing this by offering financial support to residents and delivering efficient social care. He stated that the Council had an important role in holding the ICB to account in their planning and delivery of palliative care. He concluded by informing the Committee that the Health and Care Act 2022 had placed a statutory responsibility on the local ICB to provide palliative care. He commented that he would support the introduction of bereavement support being provided for Council staff and that this should also be offered in schools.

The Chair, NHS Greater Manchester Integrated Care commented that the ICB was taking their responsibility in relation to palliative care very seriously. He advised that a report had been submitted to the Board's September 2023 meeting on this topic, commenting that an all age approach to end of life care would be taken. He said that a mapping exercise of provision across Greater Manchester would be undertaken with the intention being to address disparity and variation. He further commented that it was recognised that most people died in hospital however their preference would be to die at home with their families and loved ones and that an objective would be to better support this. The Chief Operating Officer, MLCO added that this was being discussed with the Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust.

The Chair, NHS Greater Manchester Integrated Care acknowledged the important work of the VCSE and charities; however, he commented that many of these organisations were under incredible financial strain.

The Associate Medical Director, NHS GM (Manchester Locality Team) informed the

Committee that for care home residents a personalised care plan was established and this included conversations to understand the wishes of the individual in regard to their preferred place of death with a focus on quality and dignity of end of life care.

The Quality Improvement Programme Manager, Palliative & End of Life Care, NHS GM thanked Marie Curie for their support and work on this important topic. She stated that she was proud that an all age approach to end of life care would be taken and that there was genuine support and enthusiasm to progress this work. She commented that a whole system approach that included Health, Social Care and VCSE partners was required. In response to the discussion regarding bereavement services she commented that this was a national issue and not unique to Manchester. She added that bereavement services offered to children was predominantly provided by the VCSE and these services were under significant pressures, and it was understood that failure to adequately meet this need could result in a child experiencing further complex mental health issues. With regard to Compassionate Communities, she advised that this was a social movement where local people supported others who were affected by dying, death and bereavement. She said these needed to be developed and grow from communities and recognised that a 'one model fits all' approach was not appropriate and that the voice and experience of citizens should inform this work. The Associate Director, Marie Curie reiterated the importance of the residents' voice and experience to inform this work.

The Quality Improvement Programme Manager, Palliative & End of Life Care, NHS GM supported the call for the establishment of an ICB Champion for this agenda. She further acknowledged that improvements needed to be made in relation to unmet need.

The Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care reiterated that the issue of end of life care was a very serious issue and welcomed the opportunity to have this important discussion with the Committee. He commented that this work would also link into the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Manchester Partnership Board.

The Deputy Place Based Lead for Health and Social Care Integration, NHS Greater Manchester Integrated Care stated that the existence of an established partnership approach in Manchester provided a foundation on which to progress this work, using all available resources. He commented that an Action Plan would be developed, with appropriate consideration given to how this work linked with the Making Manchester Fairer Work with relevant input from sounding and engagement boards. He suggested that an update report be submitted to the Committee in the new municipal year at an appropriate time.

The Associate Director, Marie Curie stated that research into cultural attitudes to death showed that the Netherlands dealt well with death and end of life care. She stated that information regarding this would be shared with the Committee following the meeting, adding that this also included how school programmes and education were engaged in this subject. The Chair commented that all opportunities for learning from this model should be adopted where possible.

The Director of Public Health stated that the Council did have a Staff Health and Wellbeing Plan that included mental health. He commented that there was nothing specifically related to bereavement, and following the comments from the Committee he would take that away from the meeting for further consideration.

The Deputy Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care responded to the comments from the Chair in regard to establishing a Lead Member for Palliative Care by stating that she would be willing to progress this and would follow this up with the Chair following the meeting.

The Chair in concluding this item of business thanked all representatives for attending the meeting and contributing to the discussion. She stated that this had been an important discussion and was the first time the Health Scrutiny Committee had considered this subject area. She stated that an update report would be scheduled for consideration in the new municipal year.

Decision

To note the report.

HSC/24/11 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.

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Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 8 February 2024

Present:

Councillor Simcock (Chair) – in the Chair
Councillors Andrews, Brickell, Connolly, Davies, Evans, Kilpatrick, Kirkpatrick, Lanchbury, Stogia and Wheeler

Also present:

Councillor Akbar, Executive Member for Finance and Resources
Councillor White, Executive Member for Housing and Development
Councillor Leech

Apologies: Councillor Rowles

RGSC/24/13 Urgent Business

In opening the meeting, the Chair advised that he had agreed to bring forward an item of urgent business relating to a recent Key Decision which Councillor Leech was considering calling in. The Key Decision related to the approval of capital expenditure of £1,302,000 for the acquisition of leasehold investment in Holt Town.

The Chair invited Councillor Leech to explain his concerns regarding this decision. Councillor Leech explained that when the decision was first published, he requested further information on when and how much the Council had previously sold the lease for to ensure that the decision reflected value-for-money. He stated that he received a response 4 working days later to clarify his request and that the information was provided on the morning of the day when the call-in period would end. Councillor Leech stated he felt this length of time was unacceptable and that he had been unable to garner the necessary support for a call-in due to the length of time taken to provide the requested information. He stated that he had been told that a report would not be ready to provide to the committee today had he called the decision in, which he did not agree with, and expressed his opinion that Scrutiny Committees should be chaired by Opposition members. He did, however, state that he had since received the information he requested and that this was satisfactory enough not to warrant calling the decision in.

The Chair acknowledged Councillor Leech's concerns and commented that officers involved in making Key Decisions should be prepared to respond to questions from members in a timely manner.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer, who was the decision-maker, apologised to Councillor Leech and recognised that it was unacceptable to receive such a late response to a call-in query. She explained that the contact officer for this decision had been on annual leave when Councillor Leech's enquiry was sent and

that she and the City Solicitor would discuss with colleagues in the Senior Management Team to ensure that arrangements were in place going forwards to provide timely responses to queries. She assured members of the strategic importance of the Holt Town regeneration project and that she believed the acquisition to constitute good value for money and that it was in line with the Council's aspirations. She concluded by reaffirming the value of the scrutiny and democratic process.

RGSC/24/14 Interests

Councillor Connolly declared a personal interest in item 9.

RGSC/24/15 Minutes

Decision:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2024 be approved as a correct record.

RGSC/24/16 Elections Act Duties Progress Report

The committee considered a report of the Chief Executive which outlined the planning and governance arrangements for the implementation of existing and new duties within the Elections Act 2022.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background to the Elections Act 2022;
- Progress with the duties implemented in May 2023, such as voter ID and accessibility;
- Community engagement and communications for elections in 2023 and 2024;
- Governance and capacity, including the GM-wide Strategic Elections function, the Council's Elections Act Steering Group and additional staff resources within the core elections team;
- New duties which have come into force since the May 2023 election, such as online absent voting applications, changes to postal vote handling rules, changes to overseas voting and parliamentary boundary changes;
- Ongoing preparations for a UK Parliamentary election;
- The establishment of an Elections Act Forum and the development of the Elections Outreach Pack; and
- Changes expected to be implemented after May 2024 elections.

Some of the key points and queries that arose from the committee's discussions included:

- Querying whether reference in the report to a 'tactical voting device' was correct;
- If the Electoral Commission's national campaign to publicise the Voter ID scheme had begun;
- Requesting that the Elections Outreach Pack be recirculated to all members;
- Whether a British Sign Language video could be created as part of the communications campaign and shared with the Deaf Centre;
- Issues with Royal Mail postage deliveries and the impact this could have on applications for postal and proxy votes and Voter Authority Certificates (VAC);
- Whether there were any issues with disability access during the May 2023 elections and if there needed to be any changes to polling stations as a result of this;
- How much money could be expected from government grants;
- If any additional groups had been added to the Outreach Pack;
- How public engagement would be impacted by the pre-election period;
- How confident officers were that the government would provide sufficient funding to cover the full costs of the implementation of the Elections Act;
- How social media would be used to engage young people and first-time voters;
- How changes to overseas voting rights would work in practice;
- What the requirements were for photo ID in polling stations and whether a National Insurance number was required;
- Whether any work had been undertaken to understand how many people chose not to vote in the May 2023 elections because of a lack of ID;
- Noting delays to postal vote applications through the government overseas voting portal, and querying how confident officers were that residents would be able to register for and receive a postal vote on time if a snap general election was called;
- The current wait time for deciding on overseas voting applications;
- Whether there had been any changes to the candidate nomination form as a result of the Elections Act 2022 and whether members could have sight of the nomination form; and
- Noting new rules restricting the handling of postal votes and querying how polling station staff would be trained to identify political campaigners.

The City Solicitor introduced the report and stated that there would be local and Greater Manchester mayoral elections in May 2024 and a general election at some point before January 2025, although the date of this had not been announced by the government. She reassured the committee that she and the Elections team were mindful of the need to prepare for these elections and this was underway. She stated that the report highlighted some areas which the Council was concerned about and where it was ensuring that additional resources were in place, given the additional requirements imposed under the Elections Act 2022. She explained that work was ongoing with communities to raise awareness of the new requirements, including

those introduced in 2023 such as voter ID, and to ensure that as many residents as possible were enfranchised.

The Elections and Electoral Register Policy Officer stated that the Council had committed to a major engagement campaign to raise awareness of the new requirements under the Elections Act 2022 and that 10 factsheets had been developed. He stated that there had been significant engagement with community groups and this was ongoing. He explained that officers would be going out into the community, and in libraries for example, and that paper copies of the Elections Outreach Pack would be available for those without digital access. He reiterated that all members had received the Elections Outreach Pack by email and that any comments would be welcomed.

On behalf of the committee, the Chair commented that the introduction of voter ID was an example of the government trying to solve a problem that did not exist at a total cost of £700k. He also highlighted that 589 people in Manchester had been unable to vote in the election in May 2023 because they did not have any or the correct form of ID.

It was confirmed that reference in the report to a 'tactical voting device' was an error and should instead read 'tactile voting device'.

In response to the committee's queries regarding communications, the Head of Strategic Communications stated that the Electoral Commission's national campaign began on 8 January 2024. He explained that the style and format of this was slightly different to the campaign ran in 2023 and it was not known how wide-reaching the campaign would be. He stated that the Council had provided feedback to the government on the need for the campaign to be more targeted but provided assurances that the national campaign would be supported across the Council's channels.

Assurances were provided that the campaign content was being shared with the Deaf Centre through Community Health Equity Manchester (CHEM).

The Head of Strategic Communications explained that social media would be used to engage with young people through targeted geographical adverts and in-app adverts. Social media channels such as Facebook and TikTok would be used. He stated that this communication campaign had started and that messages would change in line with different phases of the elections process.

The Elections Outreach Pack would also be resent to all members.

With regards to how issues with the postal service were being addressed, the Electoral Services Corporate Delivery Manager explained that she was due to meet with Royal Mail following this meeting and that she would seek assurances that election-related mail would be delivered with priority. She stated that postal vote

packs were sent first class and that poll cards were mailed as part of a priority scheme. She highlighted that there had not been any negative feedback regarding delivery of polling cards or postal vote packs in 2023 but that the Elections team would monitor the situation as and when things were due to be delivered.

The Elections Corporate Delivery Manager advised that there were some issues with accessibility to polling stations in 2023 but these had been addressed. She explained that polling stations were reviewed every year and assessed on accessibility and that officers undertook inspections prior to the delivery of poll cards.

In response to a query regarding funding for implementation of the Elections Act 2022, the committee was informed that the Council had received some grants from government and that it was awaiting the outcome of a Justification Led Bid (JLB). The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer stated that there was a shortfall of approximately £500k and it was not yet known how much of the remaining costs would be met by the government. She stated that the process for reclaiming elections expenses was onerous but that the Council had tried to ensure that there was a contingency for elections within the budget.

The Elections and Electoral Policy Officer explained that additional community groups were included in the Elections Outreach Pack when the service was made aware, and he invited members to provide information on any groups that might wish to be involved.

The committee was also advised that public engagement would take place until nominations open for candidates in March.

The Electoral Services Manager explained that overseas voters could register at their last registered address or where they were last residing. She stated that the government had provided guidelines for what constituted as a character of good standing and the Electoral Services Unit was currently using this as the basis for approving overseas voting applications. She stated that applications had only been submitted since 16 January 2024, so officers were still learning about the process.

It was stated that the communications campaign focused heavily on acceptable forms of ID for voters, and this was also included on poll cards and inside polling stations.

In response to a member's query regarding how many people chose not to vote in the May 2023 elections because of a lack of ID, the Elections Corporate Delivery Manager stated that this information was not kept by the Elections team and would be resource-intensive to generate. She stated that political parties could look at the marked polling station registers which were released following all elections to gather this information.

Assurances were also provided that the Unit had additional resources to prepare for an influx of queries and applications when a general election was called. The Elections Corporate Delivery Manager stated that there was methodology which could be used to indicate turnout of the local and mayoral elections, and this could be used to understand staffing needs for a general election. The Council also had a bank of additional staff who could be utilised if needed.

The Electoral Services Manager explained that the current turnaround time for applications submitted through the government portal was 14 days to contact and receive a response from the applicant. She stated that all applications had been processed and that 44 applications were currently on hold whilst awaiting further information from the applicant.

Members were informed that there were no significant changes to the electoral nomination pack as a result of the Elections Act 2022. The Elections Corporate Delivery Manager explained that there would be a briefing for candidates and agents in late February which would provide detail on the nominations pack, any changes, and a guide to completing the form. She explained that the nomination form was available to download from the Electoral Commission website and agreed that an updated version and Manchester's guide as to how to complete could be circulated to all members.

In response to a question from the Chair, the City Solicitor explained that there were a significant number of staff employed in polling stations on Election Day which meant it would be difficult to train specifically to spot political agents. She stated that the emphasis of training would be on voter ID. She commented, however, that rosettes would be an indication of a political agent or candidate.

In concluding the item, the Chair wished officers luck in delivering the elections in May and the general election.

Decision:

That

1. the report be noted;
2. the Elections Outreach Pack be recirculated to all members; and
3. a copy of the candidate nomination form be circulated to all members in advance of the Candidates and Agents Briefing.

RGSC/24/17 A New Our Manchester Strategy 2025-2035

The committee considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive which described the background to and process of creating a new Our Manchester Strategy.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background to the Our Manchester Strategy, which identified aims and objectives for the future of the city and how this would be achieved;
- Progress made against the current Strategy;
- Issues and areas for improvement, which would be included in the new Strategy;
- The development process and timeline for the new Strategy;
- How citywide engagement would be undertaken; and
- Next steps, including an update to all Scrutiny Committees in July 2024 on the outcome of the engagement process.

Some of the key points and queries that arose from the committee's discussions included:

- If the list of high-profile achievements in the report was definitive, and suggesting that being named a UNICEF Child-Friendly City be included;
- If the Strategy could be shared with deaf organisations;
- How the refreshed Strategy would address health inequalities;
- What engagement would be undertaken with educational institutions and businesses;
- How the Strategy would stay relevant for the full 10 years;
- The importance of making residents aware of the Strategy;
- If public engagement would be impacted by the pre-election period;
- If any consideration had been given to colours and fonts in line with accessibility requirements;
- Whether trade unions would be consulted on the refreshed Strategy;
- Noting that the report stated there were 72,000 more workers in Manchester, and seeking clarification on the definition of a worker;
- The sources for statistics included in the report, which differed from Census data;
- Whether the achievements listed in the report were as a direct result of the strategies implemented by the Council or the effect of wider demographic change;
- Requesting that members be provided with a list of the residents groups to be consulted, to ensure a comprehensive list;
- The challenges facing the hospitality and nighttime economy sector and the need to involve these in the development of the refreshed Strategy;
- Whether figures on homelessness included people temporarily living with family or friends; and
- How the consultation would understand and address the importance of balancing the different needs of different communities and groups.

The Assistant Chief Executive stated that the Our Manchester Strategy was an overarching strategy for the city and was being refreshed for 2025-2035. He

explained that the Strategy provided a framework for other strategies and policies and included 5 broad themes, which would be redeveloped for the new Strategy. The report highlighted how the city had changed since the implementation of the current Strategy, including successes and challenges which would be included in the refreshed version. He explained that there would be a significant focus on engagement by conversing directly with residents and making use of public activities already planned. A digital survey was ongoing, and engagement would be targeted and inclusive with a strong focus on cultural competency. There would be face-to-face engagement and paper copies of the survey for those without digital access and officers would work closely with Neighbourhoods colleagues and ward members to identify local opportunities and issues. A further report would be brought to the committee in July 2024 with the outcomes of the engagement sessions and the emerging themes for the Strategy, with the draft Strategy scheduled to be considered by the committee in November.

The Chair commented that he had shared the consultation with residents in his ward and had received feedback that this was easy to use.

In response to a question regarding the list of high-profile achievements in the report, the Assistant Chief Executive stated that these were examples rather than an exhaustive list. He also explained that UNICEF and the Child-Friendly City work would be aligned with the new Strategy and meetings had already taken place with officers involved in this work. Activities with Manchester Youth Council, young carers and schools across the city were already planned as part of the public engagement exercise to ensure that young voices were heard.

Officers also agreed to look into creating British Sign Language resources at the request of a member.

The Assistant Chief Executive acknowledged the different health inequalities faced by residents in different areas and of different demographics in Manchester. He explained that addressing these inequalities was the objective of the Making Manchester Fairer action plan and he expected this to be a common theme within consultation responses. He stated that the Strategy would try to summarise the important areas and issues across the city and would help to inform other strategies and action plans, such as Making Manchester Fairer.

The committee was advised that the Council had effective business networks in place already and the Council would work with these to reach and engage with different sectors.

The Strategy and Economic Policy Manager stated that the Strategy would remain relevant because it would be pitched in a meaningful way and would have tangible objectives. He noted that the Strategy needed to have a broad focus with detail on specific areas of work.

Officers acknowledged the need for residents to be aware of the Strategy and its objectives and explained that engagement would be targeted in communities and that consultation events would be held in areas of high footfall, such as shopping centres and libraries in local communities. Work would also be undertaken with partners and the voluntary sector to ensure a wide range of input.

It was confirmed that public engagement on the Strategy could continue during the pre-election period.

The Assistant Chief Executive also advised that there had been some initial thought given to the colours and fonts to be used in the new Strategy. He noted that this would be a slight change from the current Strategy but stated that it was important to maintain the branding of the overall Strategy.

Assurances were also provided that trade unions would be consulted with.

In response to a query regarding the increased number of workers in the city, it was clarified that this referred to the number of jobs created in Manchester since the implementation of the current Strategy, but that this include people who worked in Manchester but were not residents. The Assistant Chief Executive advised that the Census data was viewed as unreliable for the purposes of the Strategy as some citizens were unaccounted for. He advised that figures around employment had been taken from labour market statistics. He explained that in the development of the new Strategy, deep dives would be taken into some areas and an analysis would be undertaken on the impact of the current Strategy.

In response to a request from a member, it was agreed to share a list of residents' groups which would be consulted with. The Assistant Chief Executive also invited members to provide information of any other groups in their areas who might wish to be involved.

A member suggested that officers worked with colleagues in Business Rates to engage with hospitality and nighttime economy businesses during the collection period and the Assistant Chief Executive agreed to consider this with the Business Rates and Work and Skills teams. The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer stated that a link to the consultation could be included in the annual billing communications to businesses.

The Strategy and Economic Policy Manager explained that consultation responses could be broken down by sector to provide greater insight into areas and industries that could be struggling most with the cost-of-living and inflation pressures.

The Assistant Chief Executive advised that the number of households in temporary accommodation mentioned in the report referred to those in Council-administered accommodation but endeavoured to confirm this after the meeting.

Officers acknowledged the possibility of tensions between different themes, but the purpose of the Strategy was to provide a blend of ambitions for the city which would inform different strategies and action plans to address specific issues.

Decision:

That the Committee

1. notes the report;
2. requests that members be provided with a list of all residents' groups to be consulted with; and
3. requests further information on the source(s) of statistics included in the report.

RGSC/24/18 Revenue Budget Update and Corporate Core Budget 2024/25

The committee considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer which set out the latest forecast revenue budget position and the next steps and provided a high-level overview of the updated budget position.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- After the application of approved and planned savings and the use of c.£17m smoothing reserves in each of the three years, the budget is balanced for 2024/25 and the remaining gap reduced to £29m in 2025/26 and £41m by 2026/27, assuming that savings of £21.4m are delivered next year;
- An overview of financial challenges facing the Council;
- Changes to the budget position following the Autumn Statement and Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement;
- The updated Medium-Term Financial Plan;
- An overview of the service area and priorities of the Corporate Core directorate, including the base budgets for each service area for 2023/24;
- The savings plan for 2024-27 and further options for saving;
- Support for residents;
- ICT investment;
- Workforce implications, including a review of vacant posts, particularly those vacant for longer than 12 months, to determine which should be deleted with the least impact on service delivery;
- Government grants and the income they provide;
- Future opportunities and risks;
- The indicative medium-term budgets by service area; and
- The indicative medium-term budgets by type of spend/income

Some of the key points and queries that arose from the committee's discussion included:

- Commending staff for their work in developing a balanced budget for 2024/25;

- Emphasising the importance of the Household Support Fund (HSF) being continued, despite a lack of confirmation from government;
- Noting that the Council cannot add to its reserves;
- Noting the cumulative loss of budget cuts since 2010;
- How many children on free school meals would be impacted by the end of HSF;
- Recognising the lateness of government finance settlements and the uncertainty that this affords the Council;
- The importance of income generation;
- Requesting further information on the financial position of the airport; and
- How confident the Director of ICT was in being able to recruit to the service.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources introduced the item and stated that the Government's approach to the Local Government Finance Settlement had been chaotic and only announced just before Christmas. He said the final announcement when announced had resulted in a cut of 84% in the Services Grant and this equated to a £6.1m loss for Manchester. He stated that this had resulted in an outcry from local authorities and MPs from all political parties. He stated that this situation needed to be understood in the context of fourteen years of austerity and Government funding cuts and unfunded pressures such as inflation and population growth.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources added that the Government then swiftly announced an additional £500m for Social Care, however Local Authorities were still facing a £4bn budget gap nationally, resulting in a number of Local Authorities serving a Section 114 notice and it was anticipated that more would follow. He commented that despite this, Manchester had set a balanced budget and this had been achieved through diligent planning and management that had witnessed the strategic investment in preventative initiatives; using financial reserves prudently and investment in activities that were important for Manchester residents.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources stated that although Manchester had been able to deliver a balanced budget this year, the Council's financial position is expected to become even more challenging. The projected budget gap, even after using reserves for 25/26 was £29m in 2025/26 and rising to £41m by 2026/27.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources concluded by stating that the Government had continually failed to listen to Local Authorities.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer confirmed that Key Decisions relating to the collection fund had been made and that the final Finance Settlement has been received from government, meaning that the overall budget position was confirmed.

She explained that the Finance Settlement contained a £1.5m return of the Council's share of the business rates levy relating to 2023/24 and would be reported in the Global Monitoring report. There was also a slightly higher than expected increase in public health grant of £1.265m which would be passported to Public Health and £5.5m from the Social Care Grant, which would be used to fund growing pressures across social care and to ensure the right preventative measures were in place.

She stated that, since November, in the absence of any additional Government funding being available, the Council had to identify an additional £10m from reserves and one-off funding since to meet the rising costs of social care. She stated that whilst the extra £5.5m grant was helpful, it was not sufficient to meet those additional costs but would reduce the overall drawdown on reserves which would be required to support the gap in 2025/26 and beyond. It was stated that there was no guarantee that this additional grant would continue beyond 2024/25 and the Council needed to plan beyond then and would continue to press for a more sustainable funding solution for children's and adult's social care.

It was also confirmed that the £110k increase in the services grant would be used to support the inflation provision.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer confirmed that the Council would set a balanced budget for 2024/25 but stated that she, like many in local government, remained very concerned about the position for 2025/26 and beyond.

In response to queries regarding the Household Support Fund (HSF), the Executive Member for Finance and Resources echoed comments and stated that the government failed to recognise that the cost-of-living crisis was ongoing for many residents. He stated that the Council would use some of its own funds to mitigate the loss of HSF but it would be unable to continue providing free school meals for children. The Directorate Head of Finance confirmed that this would affect around 40,000 children.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources confirmed that the Council's general reserve fund could not decrease lower than £25m and reiterated the need to be financially prudent. He echoed comments regarding the cumulative impact of budget cuts since 2010 and commented on the impact of this on residents, citing pressures on home-to-school transport as an example of this.

In response to a member's point regarding the need to begin work on the budget process sooner as a result of government's failure to provide settlements in a timely manner, the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer explained that officers took a long-term approach to devising the budget and that work for next year's budget would begin in April 2024. The Executive Member for Finance and Resources also called for multi-year finance settlements from central government.

The Deputy City Treasurer explained that the Council received £120m from sales, fees and charges and stated that the Council tried to keep fees incurred directly by residents' low. He highlighted that these fees and charges were used to support frontline services.

In response to a question regarding the return on investment in Manchester Airport, the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer stated that she could not comment on this given the sensitive nature of regulated business. She explained that the Medium-Term Financial Plan did not account for this return.

The Director of ICT recognised challenges in recruiting to the service and explained that significant work had been undertaken to recruit and retain staff, including amending job descriptions; advertising more widely; and ensuring opportunities for progression.

Decision:

That the report be noted.

RGSC/24/19 Housing Revenue Account 2024/25 to 2026/27

The committee considered a report of the Strategic Director (Growth & Development), Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) and Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer which presented details on the proposed Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget for 2024/25, and an indication of the 2025/26 and 2026/27 budgets.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background to the HRA and the Council's statutory duty;
- The current year's budget position at period 9;
- The Budget Strategy for 2024/25-2026/27;
- Current budget assumptions;
- A proposed rent increase of 7.7% for 2024/25;
- Management of the housing stock and property numbers;
- Repairs and maintenance;
- The forecast overall reserves position at the start of 2024/25;
- The key assumptions used to develop next year's budget; and
- The outlook for the 30-year HRA business plan in light of the budget proposals.

Some of the key points and queries that arose from the committee's discussion included:

- Changes to legislation regarding fire assessments in buildings over 11 metres in height;
- The cap on the number of existing properties that the Council can purchase directly;
- Whether any consideration had been given to moving from communal to individual heating sources;
- If maintenance works were included as part of garage leases;
- Recognising that some money would have been wasted as a result of miscommunication between different trades providing repairs;
- Increases in the number of disrepair claims;
- Recognising how the HRA was constantly put under strain by central government introducing new regulations without providing additional funding; and
- Welcoming increased engagement with residents and suggesting that these groups be engaged with as part of the refreshed Our Manchester Strategy.

The Executive Member for Housing and Development explained that the HRA was used to fund works such as retrofitting; developing new homes; implementing fire and building safety regulations; and estate management. He informed the committee that rents would increase from April 2024 in line with the government policy of Consumer Price Index (CPI) plus 1%, which was 7.7%. He stated that the Council set aside £1m in 2023/24 to support residents with rent increase and the cost-of-living crisis and that £300k would be set aside for 2024/25 to continue helping ease financial pressures for residents.

In response to a question regarding recent changes to fire safety legislation, the Executive Member for Housing and Development acknowledged that the changes were required following the Grenfell tragedy. He stated that the Council managed a number of high-rise properties over 11 metres and that cladding and sprinklers had been assessed. He stated that further certainty and clarity was required and the Council would continue to monitor the regulations closely.

The Executive Member for Housing and Development recognised the need to build the Council's housing stock, which had reduced due to Right-to-Buy schemes and cited recent new-build developments in Collyhurst and Newton Heath. He explained that the HRA was used to purchase existing properties and buy-backs from Right-to-Buy properties where applicable.

The Directorate Head of Finance explained that a cap on the number of existing properties that the Council could buy came into effect in 2022/23 and intended to encourage a new supply of housing. He stated that this was a phased reduction of 50% of stock in 2022/23-2024/25 and would reduce to 40% and 30% in subsequent years. He explained that the cap did not have an immediate impact on the Council's housing stock given recent and planned developments, but it would be reviewed as the phased reduction continued.

The Director of Housing Operations informed members of a government inquiry into the financial sustainability of delivering social housing and he looked forward to the recommendations arising from this.

It was also stated that the Council had embarked on a comprehensive stock condition survey of every social housing property.

The Director of Housing Operations also confirmed that responsibility for the maintenance of garages leased by the Council would be stipulated within individual contracts but funding for repairs was taken from the HRA.

Members were also advised that a new engagement strategy had been devised to improve communication with residents, which included a focus on resident experience and repairs. The Director of Housing Operations stated that recent feedback had commended improvements in communication, which the committee welcomed. He also stated that there was a 13% year-on-year increase in satisfaction with repairs.

In response to a query regarding increases in the number of disrepair claims, the Director of Housing Operations stated that the Council was not an outlier in this area.

He stated that there was a significant investment programme for home improvements and that it was prudent to have provisions for disrepair claims. He commented that the Council worked with residents and awarded compensation where appropriate.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources echoed a member's comment about the strain placed on the Council and the HRA by the policies and regulations imposed by central government without any additional funding to implement these changes. He stated that it was the right thing to maintain the HRA when many local authorities did not, but that this led to challenges. He also stated that he would lobby a future government to commit to providing additional funding for social housing.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer stated that the HRA was intended to be self-financing, but this concept had been undermined by the depletion of housing stock and the inability to replace; requirements around regulation changes and the associated costs of this; and the impact of inflation and the rent cap. She stated that these challenges meant there would need to be difficult trade-offs in what could and could not be afforded in future years. She reiterated, however, that statutory requirements would be prioritised.

Decision:

That the report be noted.

RGSC/24/20 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.

In response to a member's query regarding an update on the Our Town Hall project, the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer reaffirmed a commitment to providing an update to the committee in the new municipal year. The Chair also requested an update on Factory International in the new municipal year.

Decision:

That

1. the report be noted, and
2. update reports on Our Town Hall and Factory International be added to the committee's 2024/25 work programme.

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Environment, Climate Change and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2024

Present:

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

Also present:

Councillor Rawlins, Executive Member for Environment and Transport
Councillor Foley, Deputy Executive Member for Environment and Transport
Councillor Igbon, Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods
Councillor Akbar, Executive Member for Finance and Resources

ECCNSC/24/07 Minutes

Decision

To approve the minutes of the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 11 January 2024 as a correct record.

ECCNSC/24/08 Revenue Budget Update 2024/25

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer that described sets out the latest forecast revenue budget position, and the next steps. Following the Provisional Finance Settlement announced 18 December 2023 the Council is forecasting an estimated budget shortfall of £38m in 2024/25, £79m in 2025/26, and £90m by 2026/27. After the application of approved and planned savings, and the use of c.£17m smoothing reserves in each of the three years, the budget is balanced for 2024/25 and the remaining gap reduce to £29m in 2025/26 and £41m by 2026/27. This position assumes that savings of £21.4m were delivered next year.

This report provided a high-level overview of the updated budget position. Each scrutiny committee was invited to consider the current proposed changes which were within its remit and to make recommendations to the Executive before it agrees the final budget proposals on 14 February 2024.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources stated that the Government's approach to the Local Government Settlement had been chaotic and only announced just before Christmas. He said the final announcement when announced had resulted in a cut of 84% in the Services Grant and this equated to a £6.1m cut for Manchester. He stated that this had resulted in an outcry from Local Authorities and MPs from all political parties. He stated that this situation needed to be understood in the context of fourteen years of austerity and Government funding cuts and unfunded pressures such as inflation and population growth.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources added that the Government then swiftly announced an additional £500m for Social Care, however Local Authorities

were still facing a £4bn budget gap nationally, resulting in a number of Local Authorities serving a Section 144 notice and it was anticipated that more would follow.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources commented that despite this Manchester had set a balanced budget and had been achieved through diligent planning and management that had witnessed the strategic investment in preventative initiatives; using financial reserves prudently and investment in activities that were important for Manchester residents, such as libraries; leisure centres; parks and green spaces and the Climate Change Action Plan.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources stated that although Manchester had been able to deliver a balanced budget this year, the Council's financial position is expected to become even more challenging. The projected budget gap, even after using reserves for 25/26 was £29m in 2025/26 and rising to £41m by 2026/27, adding that since 2010 the Council has had to make £443m.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources concluded by stating that the Government had continually failed to listen to Local Authorities.

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

- The financial situation imposed on Manchester continued to be bleak, noting that the report clearly articulated the scale of the challenge the Council faced to deliver services for Manchester residents; and
- Was there a possibility that Manchester would have to issue a 114 Notice in 2027 based on the projected budget position and the use of reserves.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources stated that unlike many other local authorities Manchester was able to deliver a balanced budget, however commented that once the financial reserves had been exhausted and without adequate funding arrangements in future years some difficult and unpalatable decisions would have to be taken. He stated that the serving of a 114 Notice could be catastrophic for a Council and severely constrained what they could spend on other than statutory services. He commented that Manchester Council remained committed to addressing the climate crisis and to become net zero by 2038.

Neighbourhoods Directorate Budget 2024/25

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) that set out a service overview and key priorities including an update on the Climate Action Plan, along with the latest draft budgets for the services within the remit of this Scrutiny Committee.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Neighbourhood Services Directorate had an overall gross budget of £262m and a net budget of £139.225m. The Directorate employed 1,916 full-time equivalent (fte). The budgets which fell under the remit of this Committee had a gross budget of £82.248m, net budgets of £73.801m and a fte of 400;

- Savings of £0.5m had already been approved for 2024/27 as part of prior year budget approvals and these remained on track to be delivered;
- As part of the 2023/24 budget process savings were identified over a three-year period and it was intended that the 2024/25 budget would be light touch and no further savings would be required. In light of the current financial years pressures and ongoing high inflation rates it had been necessary to revisit the initial assumptions and identify further savings options for consideration;
- Noting that it was proposed that some external charges were increased by up to 5% from 1st April, and as part of these increases' additional income of £132k was forecast from across the services within the remit of this Committee and this had been reflected within the overall budget as part of the £1m increased income from sales fees and charges;
- As part of the budget proposals an initial £0.9m investment into waste and street cleaning was proposed for 2024/25, this would provide £0.4m investment into waste collection and disposal to provide resources to meet increased demographic needs because of increased numbers of dwellings across the City that would require additional collection rounds;.
- £400k of investment is proposed for Street Cleaning which recognises the stepped increase in population and footfall whilst providing the ability to deal with hotspots, and £100k to deal with the accumulation of waste on Council land proactive cleansing of land to prevent fly tipping and there is a further £300k in 2026/27;
- The annual waste levy costs were driven by forecast tonnages of waste to be disposed of and the costs of disposal. The levy was set by GMCA and based on latest forecasts it is anticipated that this will increase in 2024/25, with the increase to Manchester being £1.532m. Further increases of £1.480m had been assumed for 2025/26 and £1.009m for 2026/27, these increases were reflected in the current budget plans for those years; and
- Future opportunities, risks and policy considerations, noting that as development continued across the city, this may lead to increased growth pressures for Neighbourhood Services as the number of households grows significantly. There was some funding proposed within the current budget proposals for both waste collection and street cleansing, but the increase demand was likely to also extend to enforcement, parks, leisure and wider neighbourhood working.

The Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods stated that Neighbourhood Services had been under significant financial pressures since 2010 as a result of unfair budget settlements imposed on Manchester. She described that in despite of this Manchester had continued to invest in the city and made specific reference to the Neighbourhood Investment Fund that supported activities that were important for residents and their neighbourhood. She concluded by calling on the Government for increased funding for Manchester.

The Executive Member for Environment and Transport reiterated the previous comments made regarding the failure of Government to adequately fund Manchester over many years and the significant challenge this had each year to deliver a balanced budget. She stated that despite this Manchester had invested in the team to support the Climate Change Action Plan and staff were able to submit bids and applications for pots of grant funding as and when they became available. In response to a specific question as to how many hours were spent drafting and

submitting fund applications, she said that this would be provided after the meeting, however acknowledged the wider point raised regarding these unsustainable funding arrangements. She stated that the investment in the Power Purchase Agreement that had previously been reported to the Committee demonstrated the ongoing commitment to delivering on the Councils pledge to address the climate crisis.

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

- Noting and welcoming the previous decisions taken to invest in capacity to tackle the climate crisis;
- Welcoming the £400k of investment proposed for Street Cleaning which recognised the stepped increase in population and footfall whilst providing the ability to deal with hotspots, and £100k to deal with the accumulation of waste on Council land, proactive cleansing of land to prevent fly tipping and the further £300k in 2026/27;
- Further clarification was sought in relation to the budget for staffing costs in light of high levels of turnover and allowing for all posts at top of grade;
- Were the projected income to be generated from Parks and Open Spaces realistic;
- Recognising the pressure the staff working in Neighbourhood Teams were under; and
- The need to acknowledge increased visitor numbers to the city centre.

The Head of Finance, Corporate Core stated that the further information regarding staffing posts would be circulated following the meeting, adding that the staffing underspends across all Council Directorates were because of a combination of ongoing vacant posts (12 months plus), the high number of part time posts and staff not being at the top of the grades.

The Director of Neighbourhood Delivery stated that the section relating to income generation and Parks and Open Spaces was evidence based, calculated on previous activities. He stated that all commercial activities and opportunities would be considered to maximise income. He further commented that consideration was given to the increased number of visitors to the city centre and noted the conversations with local elected Members that were ongoing on this issue.

Decision

To note the reports.

ECCNSC/24/09 Update on Delivery of the Parks Climate Change Action Plan

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) that provided an update on the implementation and the delivery of the Parks Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) since the last report to the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee on 9 March 2023.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;

- Describing that the Parks CCAP went live on 1 April 2023;
- Describing process against the actions; and
- Conclusions and next steps.

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

- The need for the Council to use all available levers to influence other owners of green space to adopt a similar approach to their management of green space and public realm;
- Consideration needed to be given to improving access and connectivity between parks;
- All projects and schemes to increase cycling and active travel should be actively promoted across the parks estate;
- 'Walk and wheel' in parks was important and should be promoted in parks, with appropriate consideration given to access;
- Had consideration been given to installing recycling bins in parks;
- What was the approach to grass cutting in parks, noting the conflict that could arise between different users and their expectations regarding the use and purpose of green space, particularly the attempts to promote and encourage biodiversity;
- The starting point for drafting any park plan should be the wishes and ambitions of local residents, especially in regard to increasing biodiversity;
- The approach to grass cutting and the promotion of biodiversity needed to be established for each individual park and these plans needed to be available and communicated to residents so as to manage expectations;
- What was the approach to Single Use Plastics for events held in parks;
- Discussing of lighting in parks;
- Noting that parks and green spaces often were subject to flooding due to adjacent grey infrastructure; and
- Was consideration been given to installing electric vehicle charging points in parks.

The Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods stated that there was an ongoing commitment from the service to deliver this work, noting that addressing climate change was now a priority for all Directorates across the Council. She stated that as a result of continued budget pressures the parks service had lost a significant number of staff over the previous years. She said that a business case was being developed for additional staffing resources and she thanked the staff working across the teams for their continued hard work on behalf of the residents of the city.

The Parks Lead said that the establishment of the Parks Climate Change Action Plan was a mechanism that could be used to influence partners and other stakeholders across the city. She described that this Plan had also been shared, along with the learning from this approach with colleges across Greater Manchester.

The Parks Lead said that opportunities for a wider role out of the Bee Network Cycle Hire scheme across all parks were being explored as this would support the call for increased sustainable travel. The Director of Neighbourhood Delivery commented that as Manchester had been awarded the status of European Capital of Cycling this

would increase opportunities to deliver more sustainable and safe travel options for residents.

The Parks Lead informed the Committee that all waste collected in bins in parks was sorted and recycled, however she noted that consideration needed to be given as to how this was better communicated to residents.

The Parks Lead stated that they did work with Friends of Parks Groups to discuss landscape management. She added that engagement with all stakeholders was important to develop park plans and the subsequent wider communication of these. She noted the comments regarding the tensions and expectations amongst different park users and landscape management and added that appropriate mapping and interpretation of parks needed to be clearly available. She described that there were 143 parks in the city, and all had a unique personality and characteristics. She stated that there was a lot of biodiversity already supported through these parks and the intention was to scale this up with consideration given to achieving the correct balance for all park users.

The report stated that avoidable single use plastics used by contracted partners had been eradicated across the park's estate. This had been achieved by working with these contracted partners, predominantly the cafe and ice cream operators in parks to ensure that they did not sell or use single use plastics, and this was included as a condition within the contracts and in the new tender documents that were currently out to offers. The Parks Lead informed the Committee that for larger events (3000 plus) organisers had to submit an Environmental Impact Evaluation and the department worked with organisers to mitigate the use of plastics, such as introducing reusable cup hire schemes.

The Parks Lead said that due to historical lighting contract arrangements each park had a different contract management standard. She added that installation of any additional lighting would be subject to an environmental impact assessment and the perceptions of safety was also considered, noting comments made regarding the importance of female safety in parks.

The Parks Lead acknowledged that people visiting parks had different access needs and this was understood. She commented that there were many different volunteer-led projects delivered in parks and the volunteers were reflective of the local community. She said that actions to remove physical barriers to accessing parks was being undertaken so as to encourage all residents to use and benefit from visiting parks. The Director of Neighbourhood Delivery reiterated that parks and green spaces were important for health and wellbeing and were being used to support social prescribing and the Parks teams also worked with Manchester Active to promote the health benefits and opportunities offered in parks.

The Parks Lead said that grey and green projects needed to be coordinated with the appropriate consideration given to flood mitigation and management. Regarding electric vehicle charging points, she said that consideration would be given to how this could be rolled out.

Decision

To note the report.

ECCNSC/24/10 Update on Manchester's Park Strategy 2017 - 2027

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) that provided an update on the progress of delivering Manchester's Park Strategy and an overview of the approach to develop a refreshed delivery plan to guide the future investment, upkeep and activation of Manchester's Parks.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Describing the 4 key themes of the ten-year strategy for Manchester's Parks that was launched in December 2017;
- Noting the impact of the pandemic and the value of parks;
- Data and information on the event and activity programme;
- Budget related data;
- Describing progress to date against the 4 key themes;
- Information relating to the Parks Development Programme (PDP);
- Discussion of the new challenges and opportunities;
- Describing the new delivery plan, titled "Our Parks, Our Plan" (2024 – 2027);
- Delivery of the plan, noting that where linkages existed to other relevant strategies such as the Council's Climate Change Action Plan, a joint approach to delivery and monitoring would take place; and
- Next steps.

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

- Thanking the staff working across the parks teams;
- Tennis courts and charging, and had consideration been given to maximising access in deprived areas;
- Reiterating the importance of female safety in parks;
- Noting the work of Friends of Parks Groups and adding that consultation needed to be undertaken with the wider community;
- Noting the information provided in regard to mowing; and
- How were sites for 'pocket parks' identified.

The Director of Neighbourhood Delivery stated that Manchester was working with children's charity, the UK committee for UNICEF (UNICEF UK) to become a Child Friendly City. He stated that consultation with children and young people and the Youth Council had confirmed that Place and parks were an important priority as part of a safe, secure and healthy city. He stated that this feedback had helped shape the emerging Our Parks, Our Plan.

The Parks Lead commented that each headline action of the Our Parks, Our Plan would have a number of associated sub actions and that all key stakeholders would be consulted with as this is progressed, noting the importance of capturing all voices.

The Parks Lead said that the charging model applied to tennis courts provided revenue to maintain these facilities. She said that the app used to book these courts enabled accurate monitoring and analysis of use. She said that affordability had been considered and off peak times were available.

The Parks Lead said that female safety in parks was understood and acknowledged. She said that all relevant national guidance and best practice surrounding this issue was applied. She commented that the work and actions surrounding female safety in parks had been audited and scrutinised by the Safety of Women and Girls Steering Group.

The Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods stated that community safety in parks was taken very seriously, adding that the Council was a White Ribbon accredited organisation. She added that a pilot project with local school children had been undertaken to understand the issues of safety and parks and the learning from this would be utilised.

The Parks Lead discussed the issue of lighting in parks and made reference again to the different historic contract arrangements that existed. She commented that the intention was to establish a set of standard principles regarding lighting and added that the issues of safety could be used as a lever to increase the provision of lighting in specific locations.

The Strategy Manager, Parks advised that differential mowing regimes were implemented in Birchfields, Chorlton and Platt Fields Park during 2023. This approach was being further developed with feasibility works underway to identify additional locations, with consideration being given to resident and visitor engagement.

The Parks Lead said that the Department worked closely with all strategic developments across the city, referencing the Northern Gateway and Victoria North developments, with the intention to maximise all opportunities to deliver green space with appropriate consideration given to connectivity and active travel.

The Parks Lead commented that for those larger events held in parks there was a need to balance such use against the benefits that could be realised from hosting these. She commented that revenue generated from these events could be directed back to local Friends Groups and other associated groups to support initiatives and projects delivered in parks. She advised that there was a strategic approach to the investment in parks and this included income generation.

With regard to the discussion of access to parks, noting comments raised regarding anti-social behaviour arising from the use of off-road motorbikes, the Parks Lead said that an audit against access standards would be undertaken, and best practice would be adopted to maximise access.

Decision

To note the report.

ECCNSC/24/11 Bereavement Services – Cemetery and Crematorium Climate Change Action Plan

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) that provided an overview of the Bereavement Services Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP). The report provided the background to the development of the plan, how this aligned with wider ambitions of the Council, along with an overview of the action plan.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- An overview of the Bereavement Services CCAP;
- Describing the actions identified in each workstream of the CCAP; and
- Conclusions and next steps.

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

- What was the capacity for woodland burials;
- Supporting the aspiration for Southern Cemetery to be considered as a nature reserve;
- Welcoming the establishment of individual biodiversity plans and this model should be adopted across all parks;
- Travel plans and accessibility to sites, noting the issue of parking on neighbouring streets; and
- Had there been any consideration given to alternative sustainable methods of burial.

The Strategic Lead stated that the Parks Climate Change Action Plan had been used as a template to develop the Cemetery and Crematorium Climate Change Action Plan. She recognised and paid tribute to all the staff who had been involved in developing the plan for their dedication and effort. She said that the Plan was not a static document but rather a live and dynamic plan that would be reviewed and updated appropriately.

The Bereavement Services Manager stated that currently there were two locations to facilitate woodland burials and capacity existed at these sites. She commented that if these sites reached their capacity appropriate alternative locations would be identified.

The Bereavement Services Manager acknowledged the comments expressed regarding the impact on-street parking had on neighbouring streets. She stated that there was a lot of available onsite parking at Southern Cemetery and that conversations were ongoing with local Neighbourhood Teams and the private operator of the crematorium to seek solutions to address issues of inappropriate parking.

The Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods acknowledged the issue of car parking and the detrimental impact and disruption this could have on neighbourhoods. She said the establishment of travel plans would assist in

addressing such issues, however she noted that this would need to be done sensitively.

The Bereavement Services Manager welcomed the support from the Committee for Southern Cemetery to be considered as a nature reserve. The Director of Neighbourhood Delivery reiterated the importance of this to act as a green corridor to support biodiversity.

The Bereavement Services Manager informed the Committee that alternatives to burials and cremations were considered, however this was in the very early stages.

The Chair thanked officers for accommodating a recent visit by Members to Blackley Crematorium. She said that this had been very informative. The Bereavement Services Manager stated that she would accommodate visits to other sites should Members request this.

The Chair concluded this item of business by recognising this pioneering Cemetery and Crematorium Climate Change Action Plan, adding that no other Council had done this and thanked all officers concerned for their dedication and work in developing and delivering this Plan.

Decision

To note the report.

ECCNSC/24/12 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 Chair informed the Committee that since the Overview Report had been published, she had agreed to remove the items on Sustainable Food and Zero Carbon Culture from the March meeting. She stated that work was in progress to develop the work programme for the new municipal year and encouraged Members to contact her with any specific topics that they would like included on the work programme.

Decision

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