

Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 5 March 2024

Present:

Councillor Appleby – in the Chair

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

Also present:

Councillor Hacking, Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure

Councillor Douglas, Deputy Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure

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

Louise Harding, Facility Strategy and Capital Project Lead, Manchester Active

Apologies: Councillors Hitchen and Azra Ali

CESC/24/16 Appointment of Chair for the Meeting

In opening the meeting, the Governance and Scrutiny Team Leader informed the committee that the Chair had submitted her apologies for the meeting.

Decision:

That Councillor Appleby be appointed as Chair for the meeting.

CESC/24/18 Minutes

Decision:

That the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 6 February 2024, be approved as a correct record.

CESC/24/19 Manchester Indoor Sport Built Facilities Strategy Update

The committee considered a report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) which provided an update on the key findings identified in the Manchester Indoor and Sport Built Facilities Strategy (2023-2031) and short-term action plan, to be taken forward with partners over the next 18-month period.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background to the Strategy;
- Manchester had a strong network of indoor sport and leisure facilities and a sufficient supply to meet demand;
- The governance of the Strategy, including the work of the project steering group;
- Findings of a needs assessment study for sports halls, swimming pools, health and fitness and other facilities; and

- The strategic objectives and action plans developed from analysis and assessments.

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

- Commending the work of Manchester Active;
- Whether driving distance was an accurate method of measuring accessibility of indoor sports facilities;
- A need to develop sites with strong transport networks;
- Capacity at swimming pools, particularly for children and young people;
- Facilities for disabled service users;
- Noting the point that the majority of Manchester's population had access to a facility within a ten-minute walk, and querying what this majority was;
- Current and future capacity of sports halls;
- How the need to prioritise demand for swimming facilities in the city centre was balanced with capacity in areas such as central Manchester; and
- Whether section 106 money received through new developments could be used to fund new indoor sports facilities.

The committee were presented with a short video to introduce the item.

In response to members' queries, the Interim Chief Executive Officer, Manchester Active explained that Sport England recognised a 30-minute drive as the measure of accessibility to leisure facilities and Manchester Active used this measure to ensure that it followed national standards. He stated that Manchester Active focused on local active travel to ensure that each facility could be easily accessed. He highlighted that Manchester had been named the European Capital of Cycling for 2024, which would help to publicise the ability for residents to cycle to sports facilities.

The Facility Strategy and Capital Project Lead, Manchester Active explained that there was a strong network of sports hall facilities in the city and most residents lived within a 10-minute walk of a sports hall and within 20 minutes of active travel to a swimming pool.

The Interim Chief Executive Officer, Manchester Active stated that recently built schools and those that Manchester Active were currently working with had to adhere to Community Use Agreements. He explained that agreements with Academies were not as definitive and that use of these facilities relied on working with the schools, many of which were receptive to the opportunity. The Facility Strategy and Capital Project Lead, Manchester Active explained that a planning condition regarding use of sports facilities was enforced on any new school development and Manchester Active was involved in site management arrangements to ensure that a local sports development plan could be implemented in the construction of a new school. She also stated that funding of over £200k had been allocated by Sport England over two years to 12 primary and secondary schools to widen access to sports provisions.

With regards to disabled-accessible facilities, the committee was informed that Manchester designed and supported facilities for all and he endeavoured to contact the Member following the meeting to discuss and understand his specific experience.

In response to a query regarding swimming capacity, the committee was advised that Manchester led the way in this area, but it was acknowledged that there was always more to be done. The Interim Chief Executive Officer, Manchester Active stated that no other local authority had invested as many resources into new swimming pools as Manchester. He recognised capacity issues in some swimming facilities and explained that work was needed to encourage residents to use swimming facilities in areas of the city where there was greater capacity, such as Manchester Aquatic Centre, to maximise capital investment. The Facility Strategy and Capital Project Lead, Manchester Active commented that a marketing strategy was needed with the leisure operator to encourage usage of under-utilised swimming facilities. The committee was also advised that Manchester had one of the largest swimming education programmes in the country, which taught essential skills and provided children with the confidence to continue to use swimming facilities as they got older.

The Facility Strategy and Capital Project Lead, Manchester Active clarified that references in the report to a “majority of residents” related to more than 75% of the population.

The Interim Chief Executive Officer, Manchester Active advised members that the need for sports hall and swimming pool provisions was currently being met but future need was dependent on population growth. He stated that sports halls were easier to identify and provide than swimming pools as they were cheaper to run, required less land and there were greater opportunities for collaboration with partners.

In response to a query regarding the use of Section 106 money, the Facility Strategy and Capital Project Lead, Manchester Active explained that this was received where a development was brought forward on land designated for leisure use and a mitigation strategy would be devised for the replacement of any leisure provision on the site. She stated that Manchester Active was involved in the Council’s Local Plan Review Steering Group which helped to identify future need for outdoor and indoor sport and informed the prioritisation of future Section 106 money devolved from planned development.

In summarising, the Chair thanked the Executive Member and officers for their report and acknowledged the funding challenges facing Manchester. She highlighted how Manchester was leading the way with regards to indoor sports provisions and welcomed the year-round swimming offer for children.

Decision:

That the report be noted.

The committee considered a report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) which provided an update on the Library Strategy and presented future plans.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- How the Library Strategy was delivered in 2023 and how it would be delivered in future;
- How the library service contributed to the Council's priorities;
- How the libraries performed in 2023;
- The range of services provided across the city;
- Engagement with children, young people and businesses;
- How libraries supported health and wellbeing; and
- A response to the Sanderson Review of Public Libraries.

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

- Recognising the important contributions of library volunteers;
- Requesting that the Avenue Library and Learning Centre in Blackley open for longer;
- Acknowledging that many libraries were fulfilling those functions of the state that the government had failed to do since 2010;
- What challenges could face the library sector if the Conservative Party won the next General Election;
- How the introduction of new Open Plus technology increased opening hours; and
- How cybersecurity was addressed, particularly given the breach at the British Library in 2023.

In introducing the item, the Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure took the opportunity to thank the Council's officers and partners for their work, particularly in the context of 14 years of government austerity, and he encouraged members and residents to recognise the Council's achievements.

The Deputy Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure also expressed thanks to library staff and stated that libraries were the heart of Manchester's communities and helped to improve the lives of residents. She highlighted the different services which Manchester's libraries offered, such as addressing period poverty through the Package for Val scheme, which she stated demonstrated how libraries positively impacted the lives of residents. She also highlighted the Council's continued investment, such as the opening of three new libraries in Gorton, Abraham Moss and Northenden.

The Head of Libraries, Galleries, Culture and Youth, Play and Participation Services explained that 2024 was a special year for Manchester's libraries as it marked the 90-year anniversary of Central Library's original opening in 1934 and the 10-year anniversary of it reopening.

Videos about Central Library and Newton Heath Library were also played to the committee.

In response to a query regarding the potential challenges facing the library sector in the future, the Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure stated that there would be a significant funding challenge across local government which libraries would not be immune to. He stated that there was a possibility in changes in technology and library usage but explained that the Libraries Strategy addressed these issues. The Head of Libraries, Galleries, Culture and Youth, Play and Participation Services stated that usage of libraries was close to pre-pandemic levels and that officers continued to make libraries welcoming and accessible through extended opening hours and the use of Open Plus technology.

The committee was informed that many libraries had certain days where they did not open due to funding constraints and Open Plus technology allowed for people over the age of 16 to use facilities when a member of staff was not present. It was explained that this technology was currently in place in 5 libraries, including the Avenue Library and Learning Centre in Blackley.

The Libraries and Archives Lead advised the committee that some figures relating to internet usage in appendix 1 were incorrect. He clarified that this should read 301,000 hours of free internet used in libraries and 970,000 Wi-Fi sessions.

In response to a query regarding cybersecurity, the Libraries and Archives Lead acknowledged the importance of this and stated that the Council's ICT service provided a great support to libraries. The Head of Libraries, Galleries, Culture and Youth, Play and Participation Services commented that a 'lessons learned' exercise was being undertaken by the libraries sector as a whole following the incident at the British Library.

The Head of Libraries, Galleries, Culture and Youth, Play and Participation Services also informed the committee that a survey was undertaken every 3 years with library users. He explained that the results on satisfaction in the last survey were the highest ever received and there was a clear indication of how libraries positively contributed to residents' health and wellbeing, which he welcomed.

In summarising, the Chair welcomed the 10-year anniversary of the reopening of Central Library and reiterated that it was the most visited library in the country, which she stated Manchester should be proud of. She commented that the service provided by libraries was remarkable under the challenging financial circumstances of 14 years of austerity and she welcomed the case studies included in the videos and that usage was returning to pre-pandemic levels.

Decision:

That the report be noted.

CESC/24/19 Digital Inclusion Update – bridging the digital divide in Manchester

The committee considered a report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) which provided an update on the Council's digital inclusion work, since the last report to the committee in March 2023.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Proving an introduction to the Manchester Digital Strategy 2021-2026: Doing Digital Together;
- Digital inclusion work aligns with the priorities of the region, the city, and the Council;
- How digital inclusion work contributed to the Council's strategies;
- The development and implementation of the Digital Inclusion Action Plan;
- How the digital inclusion programme was funded;
- Future priorities and projects; and
- Breakdowns of areas in the city where digital exclusion was highest.

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

- Querying if the Council's Digital Inclusion team was working with any other LGBT+ community organisations in addition to George House Trust to help them improve their digital offer to service users;
- Whether any consideration had been given to co-designing the Council's online systems with users;
- Whether there was any scope to work with internet service providers on the rollout of Gigabit capable broadband;
- What other markers were used to identify hotspot areas of digital exclusion;
- The importance mesh networks which would provide free internet to communities, and the need to pilot these in Manchester;
- Poor internet connectivity in Manchester's libraries;
- Suggesting that the Council donates free dongles to residents rather than SIM cards; and
- Issues with accessing healthcare and GP appointments in an increasingly digital world.

The Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure informed the committee that since the last Digital Inclusion Update, he had given evidence to a House of Lords Select Committee on digital inclusion and that this committee had been

impressed by Manchester's work in tackling this issue. He also informed the committee that the Council had developed a Digital Exclusion Index with data from several sources to understand the level of digital skills in the city. He stated that there were currently around 12 hotspot areas where support was focused.

The Deputy Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure explained that focus was placed on inclusion with digital channels as a vehicle for this. She commented that those digitally excluded often faced other kinds of exclusion and disadvantage and were disproportionately affected. She stated that a USwitch report in July 2023 found that Manchester was the most digitally inclusive city in the UK, which meant that there were more organisations and community groups offering digital skills support per capita than anywhere else in the country. It was stated that the Digital Inclusion Steering Group influenced the work undertaken with partners, such as third-sector organisations; the NHS; education; social media and public affairs companies; Microsoft; and local technology start-ups.

The Libraries and Archives Lead stated that libraries played a key role in providing internet access and support to residents and that there had been a focus over the previous 12 months on supporting VCSE organisations to embed digital inclusion support, which would continue.

In response to a member's query regarding what other LGBT+ organisations were being worked with, the Libraries and Archives Lead agreed to share a full list of organisations with members following the meeting.

The Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure stated that it was inevitable that many systems would be online in future, and he endeavoured to raise the possibility of co-designing systems with users with his fellow Executive Members.

The Head of Libraries, Galleries, Culture and Youth, Play and Participation Services explained that there had been a focus on targeted support in libraries for residents using the Council's website to apply for parking permits or voter ID, for example. He acknowledged the opportunity to work with the wider Council to identify any changes to the Council website which libraries staff could provide support to service users on.

With regards to work with internet service providers, the Deputy Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure advised that the Digital Inclusion Steering Group had discussed this, and conversations had taken place with Virgin Media, particularly regarding the possibility of mesh pilots across deprived areas. She stated that there was an appetite for co-working, particularly between housing providers and internet service providers and the Steering Group would continue to look into this.

The Senior Digital Strategy Officer informed members of an ongoing project with Telcom providers to map connectivity and ensure equity of access and speed across the city. He also stated that the Digital Strategy team had fed into the design of the new CRM system to ensure inclusivity and ongoing feedback was received from the Manchester Deaf Centre, which the Digital Strategy team worked closely with.

In response to a query regarding the indicators of hotspots of digital inclusion, the Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure stated that there were approximately 10 markers which could be circulated following the meeting. The Libraries and Archives Lead explained that much of this was tied into deprivation indices.

The Deputy Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure explained that the Digital Inclusion Steering Group had received examples of areas where mesh networks had been successfully rolled out in Greater Manchester. This was something that the Council hoped to implement, and early negotiations were underway. The Senior Digital Strategy Officer confirmed that conversations were ongoing with Wythenshawe Community Housing Group and the Council's Housing Services with buy-in from both leadership teams to progress the pilot and learning had been taken from Rochdale Council, who successfully implemented a low-cost, high-impact mesh network. He stated that the project was still in the discovery phase but emphasised that there was a strong appetite to progress.

The Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure informed the committee that the Digital Inclusion Steering Group had discussed the cost-of-living crisis and the possibility of social tariffs with internet service providers, which could provide low-cost internet for basic use, and this had been piloted in Wythenshawe.

The committee was also informed that Wi-Fi in all Council public buildings was scheduled for upgrade in the next 18 months and there would also be upgrades to PCs in all libraries. It was confirmed that an upcycling scheme was in place which would recycle the old devices.

In response to a member's suggestion to provide dongles to residents, the Libraries and Archives Lead explained that SIM cards were provided to the Council at no cost from internet service providers but priority cohorts, such as care leavers, were given dongles with a SIM card.

The Libraries and Archives Lead also informed the committee that Digital Health Hubs had been developed to work with GPs and health providers and create leaflets to promote the support available for those struggling to access health services online.

In summarising, the Chair welcomed the recognition that Manchester was the most digitally inclusive city in the UK and the ongoing work to increase digital skills and access amongst residents.

Decision:

That the report be noted.

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.

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Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 7 March 2024

Present:

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

Also present:

Councillor Craig, Leader of the Council
Councillor Akbar, Executive Member for Finance and Resources
Councillor Rawlins, Executive Member for Environment and Transport

Apologies: Councillor Wheeler

RGSC/24/27 Chair's Announcements

In opening the meeting, the Chair explained that this would be Councillor Lanchbury's and Councillor Rowles' last Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee meeting before the end of their terms of office and he wished them luck for the future. He also stated that it would be Councillor Andrews' last meeting before being nominated as Lord Mayor of Manchester for 2024/25.

The Chair also stated that it was the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer, Carol Culley's last meeting before she left the authority for a new role. The Leader of the Council placed on record her thanks to Carol, whom she had worked closely with, and stated that Carol had done her absolute best for the people of Manchester and would be remembered for what she had achieved in financially difficult times.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources echoed the Leader's comments and stated that Manchester City Council was in the financial position it was because of Carol's leadership. He acknowledged the difficult role of the Section 151 Officer and commended Carol for her ability to combine this with being the Deputy Chief Executive.

The Chair also invited former councillor, Bernard Priest, to the meeting and he recognised the challenges facing local councillors and the need for a City Treasurer to challenge and guide council leaders. He expressed his gratitude for his time working with Carol.

Members of the committee also placed on record their thanks to Carol and commended her work on climate change; engagement with partners; and her understanding of financial pressures and commercialisation. One member expressed their thanks for Carol's time and effort on behalf of the Liberal Democrat Group and stated that Carol had created a culture that he hoped would continue after her departure.

RGSC/24/28 Interests

Councillors Davies and Stogia declared personal interests in items 8 and 11 – Manchester Energy Network 2024/25 Business Plan.

RGSC/24/29 Minutes

In moving the minutes, the Chair informed the committee that following the item on the Elections Act 2022 Update on 8 February 2024, he had been contacted by a council employee who informed him that they had been unable to use their Council-issued employee badge as identification to vote in a polling station at the May 2023 election. The Chair stated that this underlined the ludicrous nature of the government's voter ID legislation.

It was also noted that further information on the sources used for figures in the 'A new Our Manchester Strategy 2025-2035' report had been provided to committee member following the meeting and the Chair requested that this be circulated to all members.

The Chair also commented that, during the Chancellor's budget on 6 March 2024 he had thanked many MPs for bringing issues to his attention but failed to mention Manchester City Council for lobbying for an extension of the Household Support Fund, which would be continued for a further 6 months.

Decision:

That

1. the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 8 February 2024 be approved.
2. the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 26 February 2024 be approved.

RGSC/24/30 Major Contracts Update

The committee considered a report of the Strategic Lead (Commissioning) that provided an update on the Council's key contracts, its approach to procurement of these contracts and assessments of how to source contracts due for renewal and/or extension.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- An overview of major service contracts, including expiry dates and extension options;
- Delivery model assessments for renewing contracts;
- Work of the Major Contracts Board;
- Planned recommissions for major contracts; and
- Wider work on contract management.

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

- Expressing concern that the Council did not have the infrastructure in place for insourcing of services;
- Requesting a Part B report in the new municipal year to provide further detail on the Council's major contracts;
- The importance of Sure Start centres and that the Council should consider managing these as a whole rather than individual facilities;
- Difficulties in understanding and measuring contractual oversight without qualitative methods, and querying how this could be presented in future;
- How break clauses and break points worked, with specific reference to the housing maintenance and repairs contract;
- What was different as a result of the Council's 'Insourcing First' motion which stipulated that insourcing should be the default option for services;

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer explained that the report provided an update on the work of the Major Contracts Board, and she thanked officers for their work, particularly in developing the Sourcing Policy.

In response to queries regarding insourcing, the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer stated that there was a robust roadmap behind the delivery model assessments of the infrastructure required for insourcing in specific areas.

The Strategic Lead (Commissioning) stated that work was ongoing with various services, such as Highways and Homelessness, to assess how contract management and oversight could be improved further. He acknowledged that there was a challenge in summarising performance, but he would look at how this could be reported to the committee in future. He explained that a summary dashboard on performance was provided to the Major Contracts Board and that the service worked with Contract Managers to strengthen key performance indicators.

In response to a query regarding break points and break clauses in the housing repairs and maintenance contract, the Head of Integrated Procurement and Commissioning explained that this contract had the option to extend for 3 years and discussions had been undertaken with regards to the future management of the contract. He stated that an extension had been negotiated and there was a potential to break the contract either 12 or 24 months before the contract expired. He explained that these dates had been selected to ensure that the necessary infrastructure was in place to insource the contract at the best possible time for the Council and to ensure service continuity. He stated that lessons had been learned from bringing management of the Northwards housing stock in-house.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer stated that a full feasibility study was undertaken for any contract decision as a result of the Council's 'Insourcing First' motion and the work of the Major Contracts Board. The Strategic Lead (Commissioning) reiterated this and stated that there was a greater rigour when assessing the potential for insourcing of contracts as a result of the motion passed by Council and that there had been learning from previous insourced contracts. He explained that smaller contracts were also assessed for insourcing and that officers worked with services such as Manchester Local Care Organisation (MLCO) to identify options for insourcing.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources acknowledged the work of the Head of Integrated Procurement and Commissioning, the Strategic Lead (Commissioning) and their team and stated that, as the relevant Executive Member, he was confident that the Council assessed contracts in advance of their end date and that options appraisals were undertaken to allow sufficient time to implement the necessary infrastructure and changes to bring suitable services in-house.

Decision:

That the committee

1. notes the report, and
2. requests that a further report be considered under Part B in the new municipal year.

RGSC/24/31 Progress made with Council Motions over the last 12 months

The committee considered a report of the City Solicitor which provided an update on the progress made in respect of motions that had passed before Council over the previous 12 months.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- The motions tracker;
- Progress on motions was monitored by Senior Management Team (SMT);
- Several motions requested a call on the government to take action and have raised serious issues of concern to Manchester residents and the Council; and
- The process once a motion had been passed.

The Deputy City Solicitor introduced the item and explained that the report provided factual assurances that motions passed through Full Council were assigned to the relevant Executive Member and Senior Management Team (SMT) officer and tracked through the City Solicitor's office.

One member commented on the motion 'Standing Up for Wythenshawe' and stated that this was testament to the work of officers and members in lobbying for government support for the area. He stated his hope that the Economy and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee would continue to scrutinise redevelopment in Wythenshawe.

Decision:

That the report be noted.

RGSC/24/32 Our New Finance and HR System

The committee considered a report of the Deputy City Treasurer and the Director of HROD and Transformation which provided an update on the work undertaken to

replace the Council's legacy SAP HR and Finance system since the previous report in June 2023.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background to the legacy SAP system, which was implemented in 2007;
- The vision and approach of the programme;
- The procurement process;
- Details of the preferred bidder were not yet available due to an ongoing standstill period;
- The business case for the programme, including total implementation costs;
- How the programme was governed; and
- Next steps and timeline.

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

- Seeking assurances that the project was treated as high-risk and was included on the Corporate Risk Register;
- Seeking assurances that the project would remain on track for implementation in April 2025; and
- Requesting a further update report in October 2024.

In introducing the item, the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer explained that the replacement of the Council's finance and HR system was a corporate project which had the appropriate governance, capacity and assurances in place.

The Deputy City Treasurer informed the committee that the legacy SAP system was a fundamental system which recorded financial transactions and the Council's balance sheet and held employee records. He explained that the SAP system was heavily bespoke to the Council, not user-friendly and was timely and costly to upgrade. Support to the current system would end in 2027 and, as a result, the Council decided to replace the system early. He stated that the project was progressing appropriately and that it provided an opportunity to drive efficiencies. Members were informed that a preferred bidder had been selected but a standstill period was currently ongoing, with officers hoping to provide a verbal update on the preferred bidder at the Executive meeting later in the month.

The Director of HROD and Transformation stated that a programme and implementation team was in place and significant pre-implementation had taken place. He explained that a review of existing processes and ways of working had been undertaken and that officers in Finance, HR and ICT were collaborating on the project. He informed members that a detailed implementation plan had been developed and would be reviewed with the system provider. He stated that the Council had sought extensive references from organisations using bidders, that it had listened to what had gone well in other authorities who had implemented new HR and finance systems and had received independent expert advice. It was intended for the system to go live in April 2025 with a phased implementation.

In response to members' queries, the Director of HROD and Transformation stated that there were safeguards in place to manage risk and that discussions had taken place with the Council's Audit team to ensure that the project was included on the Audit Plan for 2024/25. He also provided assurances that audits would be undertaken throughout the implementation and once the system was live. Whilst guarantees could not be provided that the project would remain on track for implementation in April 2025, the Director of HROD and Transformation acknowledged the risks involved in a project of such scale and stated that he had been involved in implementing new HR system twice in the past 5 years.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources acknowledged that it was important to view the project as being high-risk and provided assurances that as portfolio holder for this area, he had oversight of and was involved in the project. He also welcomed continued scrutiny of the implementation.

Decision:

That the committee

1. endorses the report to the Executive, and
2. requests a further update report in October 2024.

RGSC/24/33 Overview Report

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

Decision:

That the report be noted.

RGSC/24/34 Manchester Energy Network 2024/25 Business Plan

The committee considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer which provided an overview of the operation and delivery of the heat and power Manchester Energy Network since trading commenced in July 2021.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background to the Manchester Energy Network, which began trading in July 2021;
- The Network's current financial and trading position;
- How the Network was contributing to the Council's decarbonisation works;
- The policy context for heat networks;
- Governance and accountability;
- Priorities for the Network for the 2024/25 financial year; and
- The business plan for 2024/25, which was presented in a part B report.

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

- Noting that Renewable Gas Guarantees of Origin (RGGOs) were not currently recognised as contributors to the science-based carbon accounting that the Council followed, and querying why this was not flagged during the discovery phase;
- Why business plans had not been in place between 2022/23 and 2023/24;
- The specific work undertaken to decarbonise the energy network;
- What progress had been made to resolve challenges related to decarbonisation of the Town Hall and how the impact of this on network operations was being minimised;
- The importance of securing commercial customers;
- How the Network could be competitively priced and fulfil its financial obligations in the current context of high gas and energy prices;
- If there was any risk of current providers moving elsewhere; and
- The square footage of the Network.

Introducing the item, the Head of Commercial Governance explained that this was the first time that the committee had received a standalone report on the Manchester Energy Network and gave a presentation.

In response to a query regarding RGGOs, the Head of Commercial Governance explained that she clarified the carbon accounting methodologies when she took responsibility for the project in summer 2023 to ensure these were appropriate in achieving the Council's decarbonisation targets by 2038. She stated that the Network had previously sought some advice, but this was not from the Tyndall Centre, which verified the Council's carbon accounting and targets. She explained that this was later undertaken, and the Tyndall Centre had advised that RGGOs could not qualify for the use of carbon accounting. As a result, the Network exited the RGGO arrangement and a decarbonisation working group was established to ensure a clear pathway for decarbonising the Network. She stated that at the time when the Heat Network was put forward for Council approval, an RGGO was seen as the right decision. She explained that the electricity grid had since decarbonised quicker than anticipated and there were hopes at the time of approval that regulations and policy context around RGGOs would change in the time between the approval of the Network and it going live.

The Head of Commercial Governance also explained that there were a number of projections and forecasts prepared for the Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) Board to develop business plans for 2022/23 and 2023/24 but this did not lead to the establishment of a formal business plan. She explained that there had been a significant reset to ensure that the appropriate policies, processes and procedures had been established and work was ongoing to strengthen the business operations and oversight of the Network.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer thanked the Head of Commercial Governance for her work on this and stated that there was a long lead-in time to develop a business plan. She advised that financial reporting had been undertaken in

2022/23 and 2023/24 and that there remained a clean way of providing heat through the Network as the RGGO issue only related to power.

With regards to the work undertaken to decarbonise the energy network, the committee was informed that a decarbonisation working group had been established and work had commenced to develop a Decarbonisation Strategy for the Network, with the initial work on this due to complete in summer. Further information on this would be provided in an update report to the committee later in the year.

The Head of Commercial Governance explained that the original intention for the Town Hall absorption chillers to absorb the off-take from the energy network but technical issues meant that this could not be facilitated. She advised that a number of settings had been adjusted to act as a 'soft solution' until a thermal plate could be installed on 1 April. This was scheduled for this date to minimise disruption to the heating supply to the Town Hall Extension during the winter months. She advised that this 'soft solution' had been successful but acknowledged more work was needed in the upcoming months.

The committee was informed that there had been initial discussions about connecting the Network to a wider base of commercial customers, but the focus needed to be on getting the decarbonisation offer right to further engage with commercial customers. The Head of Commercial Governance recognised the opportunity to connect the Network to other buildings with the current infrastructure and a tool was currently being established to ensure that the optimum connections were made to the Network whilst considering capacity.

The Head of Commercial Governance stated that there had been a complete overhaul of the Network's pricing structure for 2024/25 and there were clear comparators and benchmarks against industry. She confirmed that the Council did not cover the costs of the energy supplied through the Network and there had been active dialogue with customers about the pricing structure. She explained that there was a standardised offtake agreement within contracts and that contracts were reviewed annually. It was also acknowledged that there was a risk of providers moving elsewhere as a result of pricing, but specific arrangements were in place that could be explained under the Part B item.

The committee was informed that the Network spanned 2km from Heron House to the Art Gallery, which allowed for a number of potential external, commercial customers to be connected.

Decision:

That the report be noted.

RGSC/24/35 Exclusion of Press and Public

Decision:

That the press and public be excluded during consideration of the following item which involved consideration of exempt information relating to the financial or

business affairs of particular persons and the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

RGSC/24/36 Manchester Energy Network 2024/25 Business Plan

The committee considered a confidential report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer which provided detail on the Manchester Energy Network's 2024/25 business plan, supplementary to an earlier report.

The committee discussed a number of areas and issues including customer retention; attracting new business; governance and accountability; risk; and standing charges. It was also requested that an update be provided to the committee in October 2024.

Decision:

That the committee

1. notes the report;
2. does not endorse the report and business plan to the Executive; and
3. requests a further update on the Manchester Energy Network in October 2024.

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Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2024

Present:

Councillor Reid – in the Chair
Councillors Amin, Bano, Bell, Fletcher, Gartside, Hewitson, Judge, Lovecy, Muse
Nunney, Sadler and Sharif Mahamed

Co-opted Voting Members:

Mr G Cleworth, Parent Governor Representative
Mr Y Yonis, Parent Governor Representative

Also present:

Councillor Bridges, Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People
Jordan Navarro, Manchester Parent Carer Forum

Apologies:

Councillors N Ali, Ludford and McHale
Ms S Davies, Parent Governor Representative
Canon S Mapledoram, Representative of the Diocese of Manchester
Ms L Smith, Primary Sector Teacher Representative

CYP/24/15 Urgent Business - Wetherby Young Offender Institution

The Chair invited the Strategic Director (Children and Education Services) to address the Committee on the recent reports regarding the treatment of a young female detained at the Wetherby Young Offender Institution. He stated that following the reporting in the press he had contacted the Governor and had received confirmation that the incident was subject to an internal review and the appropriate safeguarding response had been initiated by Leeds Council. He confirmed that no children from Manchester were involved in the incident.

The Chair commented that both herself and the Chair of the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee would be writing a joint letter to the appropriate bodies to articulate their concerns regarding the incident reported.

Decision

To note the oral update from the Strategic Director (Children and Education Services).

CYP/24/16 Minutes

Decision

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2024.

CYP/24/17 SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) Annual Report

The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director (Children and Education Services) which provided an overview of the proposed reforms outlined in the SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan 2023 and how Manchester was working in coproduction with parents/carers, young people and partners across education, health and care to test the reforms.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Information relating to the Department for Education Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Change Programme;
- An update on the Local Area Inclusion Plan (LAIP) and reflections on this;
- A summary of findings from Manchester Local area's LAIP; and
- Conclusions and actions.

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

- The importance of early identification, particularly of hidden disabilities;
- The relationship between screen time and speech and language development;
- The role of Health Visitors in identifying need, especially for those children not in a nursery / early years setting;
- Noting that the increase from April 2024 for eligible working families to be able to access 15 hours of early education from the term after their child's 2nd birthday would assist with early identification and diagnosis;
- The need to consider all good practice in relation to early identification and diagnosis;
- How did Manchester compare to other comparable cities in regard to early identification;
- How would the Local Area Inclusion Plan improve the outcomes of young people;
- What were the reasons for the increase in the numbers of SEND children and how did Manchester compare to other comparable cities;
- The need for more Education Psychologists to meet demand; and
- Calling for adequate government funding to support and deliver the ambitions described in the report.

The SEND Lead commented that the SEND reforms were focused on prevention work and early intervention. She commented that the Local Area Inclusion Plan testing had been launched in September 2023 and that the Plan would provide transparency of this work with all stakeholders included. Actions would be developed and reported against to drive improvements in this area of activity, especially in regard to early identification. She commented that currently 6% of children in Manchester had an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), adding that this was comparable to other cities with similar levels of deprivation. She also commented on the impact of the pandemic on children and young people and their development, especially in regard to speech, language and communication.

The Assistant Director of Education referred to the Kickstarter projects that were being delivered through Public Health funding, as part of the wider Making Manchester Fairer work that had seen additional resources allocated to support young people in the most deprived wards in the city. She commented that they were also working with relevant partners, including CAHMS and Health Visitors more widely on the issue of early identification, noting that appropriate support could then be offered prior to any formal assessment and diagnosis.

The Director of Education referred to an event that had been held recently on Early Years that had included consideration of Special Education Needs. She commented that there was a significant amount of work and activity already underway within early year settings, including childminders on the topic of early identification. The Chair commented that members of the Committee should be invited to any similar future events.

The Strategic Director (Children and Education Services) informed the Committee that discussions were currently ongoing with the NHS Greater Manchester Integrated Care Board regarding Health Visitors and suggested that an update report on this topic be submitted to the Committee at an appropriate time.

The Assistant Director of Education stated that initial teacher training included SEND identification training and this was also included in the Early Careers Framework that newly qualified teachers were required to complete within the first two years of practice. She stated that Educational Psychologist services were commissioned via One Education and individual schools could also commission their own services as appropriate. She added that Educational Psychologists in training, under the supervision of a fully qualified Educational Psychologists were also used. She stated that advice sessions had also been arranged online for schools that were facilitated by Educational Psychologist and these had proven to be very well received. She commented that additional Educational Psychologist support had been provided via the Kickstarter pilot previously referred to.

The Chair of the Parent Carer Forum made reference to the Social Attention and Communication Surveillance (SACS) tool for the early identification of autism pilot. He commented that this had been successful in early identification and improved diagnostic pathways for young people. He stated that discussions were currently ongoing with Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust with the intention to roll this out across the city. He also referred to the success and benefits of the Dingley's Promise Early Years Inclusion Project.

The Director of Education advised the Committee that a new specialist school would be built in north Manchester with the completion date expected in the summer of 2025, with it opening in the September of that year. She said that the school was being built by the Council and this would then be transferred to the Prospere Learning Trust, noting the positive comments from the Committee regarding the provision at the Grange School that they also ran. In addition, she made reference to the increase in specialist provision that would be provided within two existing mainstream schools.

The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People made reference to the positive response and action taken in Manchester on the issue of SEND, making reference to the collaboration between the Public Health and Education. He commented that this was in the absence of government direction or support on the issue. He stated that despite this, Manchester through the involvement in the Local Area Inclusion Plan Pilot had taken the opportunity to inform national policy. He commented that it was important to recognise and acknowledge the significant pressures all partners were experiencing that could curtail full delivery on the ambitions described.

Decision

To note the report.

CYP/24/18 Child Friendly City Update

The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director (Children and Education Services) which provided an update on work to become a Child Friendly City, including information on the chosen 'badges' for Manchester to focus on, the mandatory badges and the action plans for progressing and evidencing progress against each respective badge.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Manchester's badge selections;
- Mandatory badges; and
- Delivery stage.

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

- To welcome the report and the work taking place;
- To welcome the number of children and young people who had been involved in the discovery phase of this work;
- To emphasise the importance of children and young people being able to influence policies and strategies that affected them and discussion of options of ways this could take place, such as a children and young people's assembly;
- That planning was a key area where the voices and needs of children and young people needed to be integrated into decision-making on developments across the city;
- Positive comments about the children's rights training;
- That Councillors needed to ensure that they listen equally to the voices of children and young people as to the voices of adults, in particular, in relation to the development of local areas;
- The positive impact on pupils and the city of schools becoming Rights Respecting Schools; and
- Barriers to young people gaining work experience.

The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People agreed that it was important that children and young people be involved at the highest level of decision-making and outlined some of the work which had been taking place to identify the best way to do this, in particular, the development of Area Youth Forums in different parts of the city. He advised that further consideration would be given to how the Forums could be brought together on a citywide level and have input into scrutiny meetings and Council meetings. He highlighted that the work to become a Child Friendly City was much wider than Children's Services. He informed Members about conversations which were taking place with colleagues in Strategic Development, who were looking into how young people who could be more involved in local design and advised that all Ward Councillors had a responsibility to ensure that the voice of children and young people was taken into account in decision-making and that the children's rights training would assist with this.

The Director of Neighbourhood Delivery reported that Manchester had a strong Youth Council, which would continue; however, he advised that there was a need to introduce better engagement with a wider range of young people at a neighbourhood level so the Area Youth Forums would be rolled out from March 2024, working with youth providers in the area. He reported that parks were important to young people and connected strongly with the top three badges identified by Manchester's children and young people for the city to focus on are (Safe and Secure, Place and Healthy) and that work was taking place on the mechanisms through which young people would be consulted on parks and open spaces. He advised that consideration was also being given to the best ways that different groups of young people, such as those with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND), could be engaged with.

The Strategic Director (Children and Education Services) reported that children and young people had said that the areas where they lived were important to them which was why the initial work was focused on this. He advised that the Child Friendly City work was intended to result in long-term changes in the culture, planning and decision-making in Manchester, beyond achieving the accreditation.

The Chair reported that the Council had passed a motion to become a Co-operative Council and advised that this approach should be incorporated into the work to become a Child Friendly City. She also highlighted the role of the police in treating children and young people with respect. She emphasised the importance of Members going into schools and colleges to speak to children and young people, as many had done during Our Year, stating that Members and officers should continue to do this. She cited an example of work to create a park on disused land and advised that, when new apartment blocks were being developed, small parks and play areas, including ones which were accessible for disabled children, should be built, using Social Value. She also highlighted the role of Play Streets.

In response to comments from the Chair, the Strategic Director (Children and Education Services) informed Members about work to challenge the criminal age of responsibility. He highlighted Greater Manchester Police's Child-Centred Policing Plan for Manchester and reported that the Chief Superintendent for Manchester would be invited to be one of the Child Friendly City Programme Champions. He expressed a commitment for businesses to be involved in this work and reported that young people were a priority group for Social Value. He advised that Social Value

could provide not just resources but also opportunities, such as work experience, particularly for children who were less well served and who did not have these opportunities.

The Child Friendly City Lead welcomed Members' comments and stated that officers would make sure that they were reflected in the action plans.

The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People acknowledged the difficulties with obtaining work experience and advised that the Council was investing in a dedicated resource to match businesses with schools and colleges.

Decision

To welcome this work, noting that Members' comments will be reflected in the final action plans.

CYP/24/19 Manchester Sensory Support Service Commission

The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director (Children and Education Services) which provided an update to a previous paper brought forward in March 2022 in which Executive gave approval for officers to identify a future provider for Manchester Sensory Support Service through an open tender process. The process had now been completed and the contract for this service had been awarded to Big Life Schools Multi Academy Trust. The process of transferring the service to this new provider had been initiated and the plan (subject to due diligence) was that it will be completed by September 2024.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Background information;
- Future governance of the Sensory Support Service;
- Considerations in the specification for a new managing organisation;
- Performance indicators and reporting requirements;
- Outcome of commissioning process; and
- Proposed timeline.

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

- What experience did Big Life Schools Multi Academy Trust have in running similar services;
- What monitoring would be done of the service, especially for those students taking their GCSEs;
- Where would staff working in the service be located; and
- Why had the decision been taken to move away from the Lancastrian Sensory Support Service.

The Assistant Director of Education stated that there would be no change to the frontline service provided to students, including the delivery of careers advice and the family support workers, adding that this was included in the service specification as

part of the procurement process. She confirmed that TUPE arrangements for existing staff would be applied and if there was a failure during the due diligence process that this would result in a retender process, with no disruption to service. She commented that commissioning mechanisms were established to provide ongoing assessment and evaluation of service delivery post transition. She commented that the service had outgrown the Lancastrian Sensory Support Service. She said that the staff, who were agile workers were currently based in Alexandra House and details of where staff would be located in the future was yet to be finalised, adding that staff and trade unions would continue to be consulted with.

Decision

To note the report.

CYP/24/20 Education Strategy

The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director (Children and Education Services) which described a draft education strategy for Manchester from 2024 to 2030.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Contextual information;
- An overview of the draft education strategy, which was appended to the report; and
- Next steps.

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

- To strongly support the draft Education Strategy;
- To welcome the list of opportunities that children and young people educated in the city would have access to, the focus on the development of the whole child, not just on examination results, and that this would address the divide between the children who had greater access to these opportunities and those that currently faced barriers to accessing these opportunities;
- The increasing numbers of children with SEND and that the reasons for this should be investigated;
- Ensuring equity across different parts of the city;
- The challenges presented by contaminated land in the city when building new schools or leisure facilities and the need for good links with Planning;
- How the Strategy would address potential challenges such as changes of Government and of national education policy;
- Addressing disparities and ensuring equitable access to educational opportunities and experiences;
- The importance of raising the aspirations of all children and young people and that schools needed to have the same aspirations for all pupils and not expect less from children from disadvantaged backgrounds;
- The importance of soft skills; and

- The importance of intersectionality and that disadvantage was not only about pupils who were receiving Free School Meals.

The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People reported that the Strategy outlined the vision for education in Manchester and advised that there would be more detailed plans on how this would be achieved. He informed Members about work that was already taking place to identify ways to remove the barriers that prevented some children and young people from accessing the experiences listed in the Strategy, for example, the cost of residential trips.

The Director of Education informed Members that disadvantaged children in Manchester did significantly better than those in other parts of the country but that there was still a gap between the outcomes for disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged children. She highlighted the importance of cultural capital in improving outcomes and in supporting schools to provide that offer to all pupils. She reported that business involvement in the Child Friendly City work provided the opportunity to access both funding and opportunities that children would not otherwise have. She advised that the vision and approach set out in the Education Strategy could be taken forward, regardless of changes in Government and national education policy.

Decision

To support the draft Education Strategy.

CYP/24/21 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

To note the report and agree the work programme.

Health Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2024

Present:

Councillor Green – in the Chair

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

Apologies: Councillor Reeves and Wilson

Also present:

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

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

Dave Williams, Chief Officer, Manchester Carers Forum

Dorothy Evans, Chief Executive, African Caribbean Care Group

Glyn Meacher, Carers Programme Pathway Manager, Gaddum

Margaret, Carer

Ann, Carer

Richard Scarborough

Paul Fairweather

Priscilla Nkwenti

Mike Narayansingh

Chitra Babu, Clinical Lead, The Northern

Debbie Thomas, Unit Manager, The Northern

Darren Knight, Chief Executive, George House Trust

Jeni Hirst, Director of Service Development and Delivery, BHA for Equality

Lauren Duffy, Head of Sexual Health Services, LGBT Foundation

HSC/24/12 Minutes

Decisions

1. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2024.
2. To receive the minutes of the Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust: Improvement Plan Task and Finish Group meeting held on 20 February 2024.

HSC/24/13 Update on Developments for Unpaid Carers

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director of Adult Social Services that provided an annual update on the significant work underway to improve the lives of unpaid Carers in the city.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- The procurement of a fully commissioned Service Provider through a new contractual agreement;

- The process currently being undertaken to fill the vacant gap in North Manchester through a Locality Lead Provider (sourced from Carers Manchester Network);
- Update on work in Central and South Manchester by the Locality Lead Providers;
- Areas of focus by Gaddum, the commissioned service provider to deliver the Carers pathway;
- National investment by the Department of Health and Social Care in Carers through the Accelerated Reform Fund;
- Update from the ASC Statutory Carers Team and latest performance on assessment activity; and
- Information relating to the Carers Emergency Fund.

The Committee heard from Dave Williams, Chief Officer, Manchester Carers Forum; Dorothy Evans, Chief Executive, African Caribbean Care Group; Glyn Meacher, Carers Programme Pathway Manager, Gaddum; and Margaret and Ann, carers in Manchester who spoke of their lived experience as carers and of the role of individual organisations to identify and support carers across the city.

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

- Thanking the invited guests for sharing their lived experience;
- Carers needed appropriate levels of financial support, noting that the level of Carers Allowance awarded was inadequate;
- Noting that the report described the significant amount of work being undertaken across the city to support carers;
- What would be the approach to supporting carers in the north of the city, noting the figures in the report that described that nearly half of Carers (48%) lived in North Manchester;
- More information was sought in relation to online resources for carers;
- Noting that unpaid carers saved the public purse by undertaking their role unrecognised;
- Welcoming the £33 administrative fee was now covered by the Carers budget for the pilot Carer respite break service for the period described; and
- Noting the many young carers that existed across the city, many of whom did not identify themselves as being a carer and what was being done to support them.

The Assistant Director, Commissioning noted the comments regarding funding and budgets and advised that there had been increased investment into support for carers in the city, however recognised that more needed to be done, especially in regard to identifying those carers that were not known. She commented that a Young Carers Coordinator post existed within Childrens Services and that systems and protocols were established for those young carers to be assessed in a timely manner as they transitioned into adult services. She also referred to the 'No Wrong Door' Memorandum of Understanding that would ensure that carers were referred to the most appropriate support pathway at the appropriate time. She added that more detailed information on the work to support young carers could be included in future update reports.

The Assistant Director, Commissioning stated that the Carers Manchester brand, a collective branding, included a dedicated website and online resource, providing a

digital presence with an online referral form. She commented that a significant number of referrals were made by professionals, and they preferred the digital format. She commented that Gaddum continued to produce a quarterly newsletter that was provided in a physical format to meet individual accessibility needs. She commented that this newsletter included relevant information and advice.

The Chief Officer, Manchester Carers Forum said that the model and learning that had been developed and delivered in South Manchester would be adapted to meet the needs of carers in North Manchester. He commented that it was important to recognise that a 'one size fits all' approach was not appropriate, and they would link into the many established statutory services and voluntary organisations already successfully working in the locality, including those working with people with dementia and learning disabled citizens and their families. He said this approach would assist in identifying need and establishing connections and dialogue with carers.

The Pathway Manager, Gaddum commented that they had undertaken projects with carers specifically around the issue of the cost-of-living crisis and had supported people to access the Housing Support Fund.

The Chief Executive, African Caribbean Care Group (ACCG) commented on the need to hold events to recognise and celebrate carers. In response to a question from the Committee she advised that the ACCG had been providing support for 40 years and were acutely aware of the cultural sensitivity regarding caring amongst different communities of identity. She stated that the ACCG engaged and took the time to understand the different barriers to carers accessing support with the intention to support individuals and families before they reached a crisis point.

Both Margaret and Ann articulated their individual lived experience as carers. They spoke of the importance of support from organisations such as ACCG and Gaddum, noting that it was often simple things, such as being able to talk to somebody who understood their situation over a cup of tea that made a huge difference. Ann added that this support had allowed her the space to be able to develop and pursue her own interests in life and to flourish as an individual.

The Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care reiterated the importance of articulating the voice of carers and their lived experience at meetings such as this. He commented that this voice continued to inform and direct the work described throughout the report. He said that the service continued to challenge itself in regard to increasing the number of carers across the city to access support.

Decision

To note the report.

HSC/24/14 Manchester Public Health Annual Report

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Public Health that described that, as part of the statutory role of the Director of Public Health, there was a requirement to produce an annual report on the health and wellbeing of the local

population. The report can either be a broad overview of a wide range of public health programmes or may have a focus on a particular theme. This year the report focused on HIV and sexual health.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Part One: “That was Then” described how Manchester responded to the emerging global challenge of HIV/AIDS in the 1980s and 1990s;
- Part Two: “This is Now”, highlighted how Manchester had taken the learning from those times into the present day; and
- “What next for Manchester”, noting that the Director of Public Health had made a series of recommendations for consideration.

The Committee then heard from Richard Scarborough; Paul Fairweather; Priscilla Nkwenti; Mike Narayansingh; Chitra Babu, Clinical Lead, The Northern; Debbie Thomas, Unit Manager, The Northern; Darren Knight, Chief Executive, George House Trust; Jeni Hirst, Director of Service Development and Delivery, BHA for Equality and Lauren Duffy, Head of Sexual Health Services, LGBT Foundation who spoke to the different sections of the report. They spoke of their individual and collective response to the enormous amount of prejudice and discrimination faced by people with HIV/AIDS and the varied work undertaken over the decades to improve the health and wellbeing of people living with this condition.

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

- Recognising the report as a powerful and important document that reflected the lived experience of people in Manchester with HIV/AIDS;
- Noting the report was a testament to Manchester standing up to stigma and prejudice;
- Manchester was, and remained a voice and champion for all those living with HIV/AIDS; and
- Noting that reference had been made to a ‘family’ when describing the response and support for people with HIV/AIDS and that the Council was proud to have had been and remained part of this family.

The Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care reiterated the importance of this document as a historical record of the true Manchester spirit in tackling prejudice and intolerance. He paid tribute to the Director of Public Health for his important contribution to the city.

The Chair recognised that this was the last meeting that David Regan would be attending in the capacity of Director of Public Health before he retired. The Members of the Health Scrutiny Committee wished to place on record their gratitude and appreciation for all of his dedication and hard work over the previous 35 years working in health organisations in Manchester and being Manchester's Director of Public Health since 2009, especially for his steadfast leadership during the challenging period of the pandemic. The Committee and all those present wished David a long and happy retirement.

In concluding this item of business, the Committee and all those present observed a period of silent reflection to remember all those affected by HIV/AIDS.

Decision

To note the report.

HSC/24/14 Final Report and Recommendations of the Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust: Improvement Plan Task and Finish Group

The Committee considered the report of the Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust: Improvement Plan Task and Finish Group that presented the findings of the detailed investigation undertaken by the Task and Finish Group.

The Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care informed the Committee that Karen Howell OBE had been appointed to the role of Chief Executive and would join GMMH in June 2024. He commented that he would be discussing the work of the Task and Finish Group when he met with her.

Decision

To note the report and endorse the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group.

HSC/24/15 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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Economy and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 5 March 2024

Present:

Councillor Johns – in the Chair
Councillors Benham, Hussain, Iqbal, Northwood, I Robinson, Shilton Godwin and Taylor

Also present:

Councillor Bridges, Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People
Councillor Hacking, Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure
John Thornhill, Chief Executive, LTE Group
Rachel Curry, Principal, Manchester College and Group Deputy Chief Executive Officer, LTE Group
Mark Hughes, Group CEO, The Growth Company
Victoria Braddock, Managing Director, Marketing Manchester
Janine Smith, Director of Business Growth, Business Growth Hub
David Hilton, Business Development Director, MIDAS
Jonathan Ebbs, Project Manager, Build a Business and Business and IP Centres

Apologies:

Councillor Richards

ERSC/24/13 Minutes

Decision

That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2024 be approved as a correct record.

ERSC/24/14 Work and Skills Strategy 2022-2027 Update

The Committee received a report of the Director of Inclusive Growth which provided a progress update and the next steps for the delivery of the strategy's five key themes.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Contextual information;
- Headline achievements;
- Case studies;
- Challenges; and
- Measuring success.

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

- To welcome the focus on giving the most vulnerable residents access to the best quality work and skills training, support and funding;

- Concern that the level of Shared Prosperity Funding available was significantly lower than the funding which it had replaced;
- Concern that there were frequent new initiatives, advising that consistent, well-known programmes were needed so that people knew where to go to access training and support;
- Concern about people who had dropped out of the labour market;
- Digital inclusion including suggesting that the Committee might want to consider a report on this at a future meeting;
- Whether there were any sectors with large skills gaps which would particularly benefit from investment; and
- The increase in young people who were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) and work to address this.

The Director of Inclusive Economy clarified that the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) matched the European element of the previous European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and European Social Fund (ESF) programmes, which was 50% of the total previous funding levels, advising that there was an issue concerning both the level of funding and its longevity. She recognised a Member's comments about the range of different initiatives announced by the Government to address economic inactivity, each aimed at slightly different cohorts and with slightly different offers, and acknowledged that this could be confusing for both frontline staff and people who could benefit from these programmes. She informed Members that Manchester had been recognised as the most digitally inclusive city in the country due to the number of digital access hubs per 100,000 digitally excluded residents. She drew Members' attention to the Digital Exclusion Index which had been considered at a previous Committee meeting and outlined how Libraries and the Work and Skills Team had been working together to improve digital inclusion. In response to the question about skills gaps, she advised that digital, construction, education, health and social care were sectors which her service worked closely with to address skill shortages. She reported that the biggest group in the city in terms of economic inactivity was higher education students, who were not a primary area of concern; however, the next two groups were people with caring responsibilities, largely women, and people with underlying health conditions and she drew Members' attention to information in the report on initiatives to support these groups into work. In response to a question about the increase in the number of young people who were NEET, she reported that the total number of 16- to 18-year-olds in the city had increased significantly, resulting in increased pressure for post-16 places and young people who were most vulnerable to becoming NEET being unable to secure college places. She informed Members that Greater Manchester had secured additional SPF investment for intensive work with young people who had not secured a place in education or training.

The Work and Skills Lead informed Members how education providers in the city changed their curriculum to match demand for skills and about National Skills Fund Bootcamp funding, which had targeted areas such as digital skills and green skills.

The Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure informed the Committee that the Council's Work and Skills activity included a focus on net zero targets, in particular the Green Skills Plan, and highlighted that the Environment, Climate

Change and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Committee would be considering a report on Housing Retrofit, including Green Skills, at its next meeting.

Decisions:

1. To note progress on the themes of the Work and Skills Strategy delivery.
2. To request that a future report include information on skills matching and the data behind that, including reference to the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP).
3. To receive a report on the Digital Strategy, with particular reference to digital inclusion.

ERSC/24/15 The LTE Group Update: Strategy and Performance

The Committee received a report of John Thornhill, Chief Executive, LTE Group and Rachel Curry, Principal of Manchester College and Group Deputy CEO which provided strategy and policy updates from the LTE Group and an update from one organisation within the Group, The Manchester College.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- LTE Group strategy and policy including:
 - Pay;
 - Prison education and resettlement;
 - Devolution and skills; and
 - National Apprenticeship policy; and
- An update from The Manchester College including:
 - An overview of the College's engagement with Ofsted and the quality of provision;
 - An update on the College's student cohort;
 - College Vision 2027 Strategy, Curriculum Strategy, including T level update, and engagement with employers;
 - Learner outcomes performance 2022/23;
 - Progress of the College's Estates Strategy and associated carbon reduction; and
 - The post-16 population increase and the growing crisis in the city through lack of places for technical and vocational education from 2023 for the next decade.

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

- Welcoming the achievements of the LTE Group and The Manchester College;
- Recognising major challenges with Further Education funding;
- Requesting more detail on work to address climate change and environmental issues in future reports;
- What the new Education Inspection Framework would consist of and how the college was preparing for an Ofsted inspection;

- Noting that the majority of students, both aged 16-18 and adults, were male and querying why this might be;
- Whether there were any vacancies at the college and if this would cause any issues for the next academic year;
- Whether the LTE Group expected any changes to the Apprentice Levy in the government's budget announcements on 6 March;
- How reform to the Apprentice Levy would benefit the college;
- The devolution qualification (MBACC);
- What the LTE Group and Manchester College would change if they had a magic wand; and
- What the revenue ask of government would be.

The Principal, Manchester College and Group Deputy Chief Executive Officer, LTE Group emphasised that The Manchester College was a diverse and inclusive institution with around 6000 students aged between 16 and 18-years-old and 6000 adult students. She highlighted that 79% of young people and 74% of adults enrolled at The Manchester College came from deprived areas and free breakfast for all students and staff had been introduced in the last academic year following concerns over the volume of students experiencing challenging personal circumstances and food poverty. She stated that care-experienced young people made up 6% of the 16-18-year-old student population at the college and 30% of students had a declared learning difficulty or disability with 10% of students having an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) in place, supported by the Council who the college had a strong relationship with. She explained that the college had retained a significant focus on high-quality technical education and T-Levels continued to be delivered, on which there were currently 335 students with numbers expected to treble as the government defunded the previous BTEC qualification.

The Principal, Manchester College and Group Deputy Chief Executive Officer, LTE Group informed the committee that high outcomes for students continued to be delivered and the college was particularly proud of its achievement rates among high-needs students; those entitled to Free School Meals; care leavers; and in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses. She stated that phase two of the college's Estates Strategy was underway to extend the city campus, which would provide facilities for students in Business and Professional Studies and was progressing well and expected to open to students in September 2025.

She acknowledged challenges with capacity, reporting that there had been an increase in the number of applications and enrolments to the college, with a waiting list currently in place. She highlighted that this indicated a clear view amongst young people as to what they wanted to study, and she welcomed the demand for T-Level courses. It was stated that a review was underway which could introduce short-term measures to modestly increase the amount of available teaching space and outreach work was undertaken with organisations such as Manchester Art Gallery and Band on the Wall who provided classroom space, but this was limited and did not compensate for the space needed.

She also stated that there were interdependencies between post-16 capacity and government policy, such as the requirement for students who did not receive a high GCSE grade in English and Maths to continue studying these subjects within a

college setting. She stated that this required an additional 22 English and Maths classes at the college this year and an additional 6 GCSE teachers had been recruited to facilitate this. She explained that there was a sector-wide challenge in the recruitment of teachers within Further Education, particularly for English; Maths; Health and Social Care; Media; and Construction. The committee was advised that the Further Education sector lagged behind the Schools sector with regard to average funding for teachers and the Principal, Manchester College and Group Deputy Chief Executive Officer, LTE Group explained that there had been changes to terms and conditions for teachers, including increased annual leave; a reduction in the working week; and an improved pay offer, in order to be an attractive employer to prospective candidates.

The Chief Executive, LTE Group commended the Council's Work and Skills team, the Economy and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee and the Work and Skills Board and stated that their work had been instrumental in the LTE Group's achievements since 2019. He acknowledged some challenges moving forward but stated that he was confident that the partnership with the Council would help to address these issues.

He highlighted that the performance of The Manchester College was within the top 10% nationally and emphasised the need to continue offering a high-quality programme for students. He recognised challenges arising from government funding shortfalls and requested the committee's help in lobbying for this. He noted that school place planning was managed differently to further education and technical vocation places and that further education settings were typically asked to provide match funding when bidding for government capital grants. He explained that a bid had been made in 2023, in conjunction with the Council, and some funding was offered by government but there were stipulations in place for the college to provide match funding, which it was unable to allocate in the short-term given previous expenditure.

The Chief Executive, LTE Group stated that there had been positive work to provide year-on-year investment to meet population growth but reiterated previous comments regarding the challenges arising from government policy. He also emphasised the time and research undertaken by applicants in choosing The Manchester College and the dissatisfaction that capacity issues caused applicants when they could not be allocated a place. He also explained that the LTE Group modelled the future place gap on the number of people enrolling on technical education courses and were currently working to the lowest-case scenario as it did not include adult students or those from other areas of Greater Manchester and he stated that the scale of the challenge was significant.

He explained that the establishment of a Joint Senior Working Group consisting of political advisors, officers, the Chamber of Commerce and the LTE Group, as recommended in the report, would help to address the stakeholder challenges in delivery.

In response to members' queries, the Principal, Manchester College and Group Deputy Chief Executive Officer, LTE Group suggested that a future report include a

deep dive into Green Skills and how climate change and environmental issues were addressed on all courses.

The Principal, Manchester College and Group Deputy Chief Executive Officer, LTE Group confirmed that an Ofsted inspection was expected imminently. She stated that a full review of the quality of provision had been undertaken over the last year and this had mimicked the same methodology used by Ofsted, including a deep review of the curriculum offer and engaging with students. This had resulted in an understanding of strengths and areas for improvement and staff were supported to be able to articulate these. She acknowledged the pressure associated with Ofsted inspections and stated that the college was encouraged by the changes to Ofsted's approach.

The committee was informed that the balance between male and female students amongst the 16- to 18-year-old cohort was largely even and a majority of adult students were male. This could be attributed to a higher proportion of male refugees arriving in Manchester and enrolling at the college and the majority of these undertook ESOL courses.

The Principal, Manchester College and Group Deputy Chief Executive Officer, LTE Group confirmed that there were vacancies at the college, and these were being filled with agency staff. She stated that vacancies impacted the quality of education in some departments where it was difficult to recruit, although it was noted that the college offered teacher training courses and were reaching out to those who had completed their course but might wish to return to teach. An example of this was in construction. She highlighted that the biggest difficulties in recruitment were in English and Maths, as the college competed with schools to attract candidates. The college would also be recruiting Specialist Practitioners, who would be given a higher rate of pay, and the Principal, Manchester College and Group Deputy Chief Executive Officer, LTE Group recognised the fantastic work of all teachers.

The Chief Executive, LTE Group explained that a significant review had been undertaken with the Department for Education (DfE) which indicated a decrease in the number of people undertaking teacher training. He stated that conversations with the Executive team at LTE Group and with the Council's Work and Skills team had been undertaken to discuss the possibility of developing an academy to train Further Education teachers and the rationale for adding teaching to the Local Skills Improvement Plan. An update on these strategic, long-term trends could be provided in the next update to the committee.

In response to a query regarding the UK apprentice model and levy, the Chief Executive, LTE Group stated that work had recently concluded to assess this nationally and he explained that the apprentice levy was developed prior to Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic when free movement of labour and the ability to upskill European workers was more common. He stated that some sectors, such as health and social care, were struggling to make the apprentice model work because staffing challenges restricted capacity to provide time for training to employees. He explained that a number of suggestions had been made to the DfE's policy team, such as the ability to use the levy to fund backfilling the role of the apprentice whilst they were studying or in training and to apply an increase based on Consumer Price Index

(CPI) rates to the minimum apprentice wage. He also suggested the need for the Treasury and the DfE to accurately distribute the levy fund as there was a perception that the amount of revenue raised by the levy was not being fully cascaded to the DfE for distribution to providers.

In response to queries regarding devolution, the Chief Executive, LTE Group advised that the report in front of members included a link to a report which had been shared with the two main political parties at their conferences and others and highlighted the positive opportunities that devolution would bring to Manchester. He stated that there appeared to be some stark differences regionally in the way that devolution worked, and he emphasised a need for regional flexibility but with a consistent national approach. He explained that the LTE Group was hugely supportive of any measure, such as the MBACC, that allowed greater choice and pathways for school leavers, but he highlighted that there were currently bigger priorities in the city.

The Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure reiterated the challenges in capacity for post-16 education and stated that he, the Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People and officers had developed a closer working relationship between the Strategic Education Partnership and the Work and Skills Board to ensure that pathways and any issues were widely shared and understood.

The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People stated that he had recently joined the Board of the LTE Group and commended the professionalism of this governing body. He echoed comments about partnership working and capacity issues.

Decisions:

That the committee

1. notes the very strong performance of the Manchester College, its ongoing support for a wider “eco system” with the city and the growing importance of the College locally for young people and parents in terms of their first choice;
2. notes the key involvement of Manchester City Council in the timely disposal of the Shena Simon site to allow the new extension at our city centre campus to open on time and ease some of the capacity issues;
3. has considered the issues in the report and supports efforts to ensure that the urgency and serious nature set out are better understood by city stakeholders;
4. supports the creation of a Manchester task force across the LTE Group, Council officers, elected members and business representatives to develop the analysis, agree communications to residents, schools and communities and to continue escalating post-16 capacity concerns to GMCA and government;
5. notes the national work LTE Group are undertaking on apprenticeships and will add the shared learning on this to the items to be scheduled for the next municipal year;

6. notes that an update on Green Skills work in all courses will be included in a future update report on the LTE Group.

ERSC/24/16 Manchester Adult Education Service (MAES) Update

The Committee received a report of the Director of Inclusive Economy and Head of MAES which provided information on MAES performance in 2022/23 and the skills challenges in the city.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Current projects;
- New programmes;
- Performance and funding 2022/23;
- Enrolment/recruitment term 1 (September to December 2023);
- Quality of education;
- ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) and ESOL Advice Service; and
- Priorities for the current academic year.

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

- Commending the Carbon Literacy training provided by MAES, which a member had recently attended;
- Why Ofsted identified learners' understanding of the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism and how it applied to them in their personal lives and at work as an area for improvement, and how would this be improved upon;
- How asylum seekers were supported through MAES;
- What more could be done to support ESOL learners and to increase provisions;
- Why the number of learners had dropped in 2023/24;
- What other metrics were used to indicate performance and outcomes;
- What safeguarding measures were in place to prevent abuse of learners; and
- Noting that the Service Improvement Plan included assigning responsibility to a specific member of staff in the High Needs team to meet with learners and parents and carers at key points, and querying what these key points were.

The Head of MAES stated that the service focused its efforts on reaching those furthest from education, providing routes into education and providing opportunities to understand the different options available to them. He explained that MAES provided a range of courses, such as ESOL, English and Maths, and community learning and there had been great achievement in high-level provision, particularly in Level 3 courses where uptake had doubled year-on-year. He acknowledged recruitment challenges and explained that teacher education was provided at Level 3 to encourage residents to view teaching as a viable career and that the service had participated in the 'Routes into Teaching' programme in the previous academic year with other service providers across the city. He stated that the teacher education

programme continued to be developed to enable continued service delivery for residents.

The Head of MAES highlighted that the service had been awarded a 'Good' rating by Ofsted, which was a welcome achievement, and time would be spent between now and the next inspection to understand the aspirations of residents and how the service's provisions could continue to evolve to meet these needs.

In response to members' queries, the Area Adult Education Manager explained that MAES had already identified learners' understanding of the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism on its Service Improvement Plan and work was already underway on this. She stated that many learners were part-time and attended one session a week which made it difficult to embed into the curriculum, but this would be done in a way which still allowed the service to meet the needs of learners through learning materials and critical thinking skills.

The Area Adult Education Manager explained that, in partnership with the ESOL Advice Service, MAES had been working with hotels where asylum seekers were housed in the city to undertake assessments for asylum seekers to begin ESOL courses. She advised that funding was in place for asylum seekers who had been in the UK for more than 6 months to enrol onto an ESOL course, but she noted challenges when asylum seekers were relocated elsewhere in Greater Manchester, although efforts were made to transfer learners to other providers. She acknowledged that relocation impacted retention rates, and this was a common theme across other providers in Manchester.

The Resource and Performance Manager, MAES highlighted that ESOL enrolment in the first term of 2023/24 was under 100% for the first time and he attributed this to the amount of people who had withdrawn and re-enrolled in a course as a result of being moved around Home Office accommodation.

In response to a query regarding how wait times for ESOL courses could be reduced, the Area Adult Education Manager stated that the average wait time for a place on an ESOL course was 3 months. She explained that some learners had specific requirements with regard to the location and schedule of a course and the service had been running ESOL fairs in conjunction with the ESOL Advice Service for those on the waiting list to signpost to other providers and volunteering opportunities. She also highlighted the availability of free online materials and Talk English clubs, which were informal volunteer-run groups in libraries and community venues.

The Resource and Performance Manager, MAES explained that the number of individuals had decreased but the amount of learning had increased as learners accessed different strands of MAES, particularly English, Maths or a vocation. He also emphasised that the trajectory of enrolments was increasing.

With regard to the metrics used to measure outcomes, the Head of MAES explained that this was not limited solely to achievement and qualification rates. He stated that the Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement (RARPRA) approach

was used to measure softer outcomes and more detail on this could be included in the next annual update.

The Area Adult Education Manager highlighted the strong emphasis on safeguarding within the service and explained that all staff were able to access signposting information for learners where required. Staff could report a cause for concern which would be picked up by the safeguarding team, who would advise the member of staff on how to help the learner or could liaise directly with the learner to provide pastoral support. She advised that the majority of cause for concern reports related to housing, mental health and domestic abuse and links with organisations who could help with these issues had been developed. Invitations were also extended to organisations to visit the learning centres and raise awareness of the support available. The committee was also informed that safeguarding measures were in place for learners who had an EHCP.

The Head of MAES also advised that detailed analysis of progression data was undertaken and measured learners who progressed into further education, higher education and employment. This data would be circulated to the committee following the meeting.

The Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure commended the work of MAES and stated that he had visited every learning centre in the last 12 months. He had also met with the Ofsted Inspector and welcomed the findings and the caring culture within the service. He also emphasised the increase in students on high-level courses and the specialist programmes on offer.

Decisions:

That the report be noted.

ERSC/24/17 Support for Business

The Committee received a report of the Director of Inclusive Growth which provided an update on the support offered by the Manchester Growth Company and the Manchester City Council to support businesses in Manchester to set up and grow.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Contextual information;
- Business support programmes that were previously funded under ERDF; and
- An update and summary of the newly funded business support services provided by GC Business Growth Hub and the Manchester Library Service's Business and Intellectual Property Centre - Build a Business Service, funded under the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

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

- Commending the work of The Growth Company;

- Noting the return on investment for the Build a Business scheme, and querying the usual level return on investment expected from these types of schemes;
- What could be done to support businesses whilst the UK's general economy was in a technical recession;
- If any changes to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund were expected in the Chancellor's Budget announcements on 6 March;
- How decisions were made as to how much investment to provide a start-up;
- Requesting that social value be quantified in a future report;
- How to ensure that support initiatives effectively reached and empowered communities facing historic disadvantage, helped to eradicate issues such as child poverty and closed the gap in economic inactivity while fostering a truly inclusive city;
- The impact of delays in funding after the end of UKSPF in March 2025;
- Whether there were routes into and signposting for businesses involved with The Growth Company to become a Manchester Living Wage employer;
- Welcoming the focus on cooperatives, and querying what this could look like in practice; and
- What the Greater Manchester Strategy for the Visitor Economy 2024-2030 might look like.

The Group CEO, The Growth Company informed the committee that The Growth Company was a social enterprise which had been operating for 30 years and was the principal organisation delivering business support, investment and promotion across Greater Manchester. He stated the organisation was involved in GMCA's governance architecture and there were five councillors on the company's board, including the Leader of Manchester City Council. He explained that the work of The Growth Company focused on promoting successful and resilient businesses; creating good and inclusive employment opportunities; and working toward environmental sustainability within businesses and he recognised the interdependencies between businesses, the health and wellbeing of residents and the delivery of high-quality services.

The committee was also informed that 75% of businesses that worked with The Growth Company had seen increased productivity, that around 40% of participants on The Growth Company's programmes were from diverse ethnic communities and that 40% of participants were female. The Group CEO, The Growth Company stated that the organisation was responsible for 90% of European Regional Development Fund and all activities were subject to independent evaluation. He highlighted that the ERDF had now ended and that this had been replaced by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, which he stated had some benefits such as less restriction on who could be supported in the economy.

The Group CEO, The Growth Company acknowledged heightened geopolitical tensions across the world and stated that businesses were having to operate in this context. He highlighted, however, that this was having minimal impact in Manchester and Greater Manchester where visitor and hotel occupancy numbers remained at a good level and where international events, such as the MTV European Music Awards, continued to be held.

In response to queries regarding the Build a Business scheme, the Project Manager, Build a Business explained that it was a difficult project to start post-pandemic and given the rigidity of the ERDF requirements. He stated that engagement with participants had now increased, and this had been made easier by the shift to UKSPF. He highlighted that the return on investment for the Business and IP Centre was much higher, with £6.63 generated from every £1 invested. The Work and Skills Lead explained that over 2000 new businesses had been supported through the Build a Business scheme and this had delivered over £17k of Gross Value Added (GVA).

The Director of Business Growth, Business Growth Hub emphasised the importance of supporting entrepreneurs and start-up businesses and stated that return on investment in start-ups was often similar to that of the Build a Business scheme.

In response to queries regarding UKSPF, the Group CEO, The Growth Company advised that this was due to end in March 2025 and that the organisation was looking at how to increase dialogue with the Civil Service to lobby for an extension and how the GM devolution and single settlement might help. He explained that the majority of The Growth Company's funding came from GMCA, with some received directly from central government, and was made up of retained business rates and UKSPF. He stated the current model could carry over for one year from 2026 as there would be some form of extension to UKSPF and the retained business rates scheme was likely to continue. There was also a possibility that discussions on the GM single settlement could accelerate, which would absorb the UKSPF, and there would be an option for funding to be received solely from the single settlement.

He also stated that there were no expectations of what might be announced in the Chancellor's Budget.

The Group CEO, The Growth Company stated that Greater Manchester had some amazing and ambitious companies but that many organisations were being cautious in any decision-making. He stated that a definitive General Election result would help to resolve this.

The Group CEO, The Growth Company informed members that the decision on how much money to invest in start-up companies was made by Commissioners as The Growth Company were in receipt of grants and contracts from external sources, such as regional and national government. He stated that The Growth Company worked with partners to collate funding strands to make it easier for clients and there was a wide range of returns on investment across the Build a Business project.

With regards to the Real Living Wage, the committee was informed that The Growth Company and other services automatically referred businesses to the Employment Charter. The Group CEO, The Growth Company explained that paying the Real Living Wage was an ambition of the Employment Charter but stated that there might be some challenges in companies retaining their Real Living Wage Employer accreditation from April when a 10% uplift came into force.

It was reiterated that The Growth Company saw Manchester being an inclusive city as one of its key mandates and several programmes were undertaken to directly focus on attracting people into the labour market and helping to upskill the workforce. The committee was also advised of work with partners and outreach approaches and The Growth Company's diverse reach was reiterated.

In response to a query regarding cooperatives, the Director of Business Growth, Business Growth Hub informed members that there was a specialist team providing dedicated support to cooperatives on either a 1:1 basis for bespoke needs or cohort programmes made up of a range of businesses experiencing similar challenges. This work included addressing particular needs, creating awareness of routes to funding, commercialisation and governance structures. She also stated that an element of UKSPF was allocated to work with social enterprises and cooperatives, which had been tendered and awarded to two organisations.

The Managing Director, Marketing Manchester explained that her organisation's Tourism Director was leading on the Greater Manchester Strategy for the Visitor Economy 2024-2030 and extensive consultation had been undertaken with the Council's leadership and the lead consultant for the Cultural Strategy. She stated that a Visitor Economy Leaders Group had been established to consult on the strategy and this dovetailed into the national Visitor Economy Strategy through Visit England and the Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) status that Manchester had been awarded.

Decisions:

That the committee

1. notes the report, and
2. requests a report on business support for marginalised communities be included on the committee's work programme for the next municipal year.

[Councillor Johns declared a personal interest due to having written on the subject of employment charters.]

ERSC/24/18 Overview Report

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

The Chair noted that this was the last meeting of the municipal year and placed on record his thanks to members and officers for their work. He also wished those up for election in May good luck.

Decision:

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

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Environment, Climate Change and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2024

Present:

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

Apologies: Councillor Collins and Holt

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 Ahmed Ali, Deputy Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods
Councillor White, Executive Member for Housing and Development
Councillor Hacking, Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure
Councillor Johns, Chair of the Economy and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee

ECCNSC/24/13 Minutes

Decision

To approve the minutes of the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 8 February 2024 as a correct record.

ECCNSC/24/14 Housing Retrofit

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

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- An update on Social Housing, including Council owned properties;
- Describing the programmes targeted at private homeowners and the private rented sector;
- Cross tenure approaches and area-based schemes;
- Information on research projects;
- Resident engagement;
- Discussion of work and skills, incorporating an update on Green Skills;
- Funding arrangements;
- Internal staffing resources;
- An update on the approach to developing a Retrofit Plan; and
- Conclusions.

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

- That future update reports should include a visual representation that describes delivery of retrofitting by different tenures, this could be a graph or similar chart so as to understand progress against the stated ambition to retrofit 84,000 homes in the city by the end of 2025;
- Recognising the complexity of this issue and the limitations presented as a result of the short-term funding pots of money that were available to the city;
- The need for continual lobbying of the government for adequate, long-term funding to deliver the ambitions described;
- Recognising the importance of delivering housing retrofit at scale as an important contributor to delivering the carbon reduction target for the city;
- Noting that retrofitting was also a social justice issue, particularly in the context of the cost-of-living crisis;
- Social Housing Providers should collaborate to deliver housing retrofit programmes and use their collective powers to achieve economies of scale when commissioning works;
- Were loans available, rather than grants for residents wishing to undertake retrofit work on their properties; and
- The position on new builds and the installation of gas boilers.

The Executive Member for Housing and Development acknowledged the ask from the Committee regarding a dashboard to report progress against the 2025 target and stated that consideration would be given to how best to provide this in future update reports. He commented that retrofitting work was part of the wider Housing Strategy for the city, adding that initially the work had been targeted at social housing using the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund. He added that local Housing Providers had applied for and been awarded funding through the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund also, however he highlighted the issues and challenges surrounding green skills to deliver the work at the scale and pace required. He commented that the projects that had been delivered, including the pilot zero carbon retrofitting in North Manchester had demonstrated proof of concept to drive this programme of work. He described the current challenges to delivery, namely inadequate and short-term funding arrangements, inflationary pressures and the need to improve tenant engagement on this important subject area. He said that delivery of retrofitting needed to be considered in terms of both addressing the climate crisis and the many benefits to residents, both in terms of living in more comfortable and cost-effective homes. In response to residents who were willing to pay and the different options available, he commented that the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) Portal would direct people to the different schemes available, adding that the 'Feel the Benefit' campaign to help Greater Manchester residents access home energy savings support was due to be launched. This campaign would see GMCA and its partners coming together to make energy saving advice clearer and easier to access. He said that until gas boilers were banned there were currently no enforcement options available however officers would continue to engage with developers on this issue, adding that the Local Plan would strengthen this position and new social housing buildings included alternatives to traditional gas boilers.

The Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure discussed the challenges that existed in terms of the work and skills market to deliver the scale of retrofitting

required. He described the work of the Work and Skills Team who had embedded within the Liveable and Zero Carbon priorities into the refreshed Work and Skills Strategy. He commented that this refreshed Work and Skills Strategy would be reported to the Executive and appropriate Scrutiny Committee. He further advised that the Work and Skills Team were also working closely with GMCA providing support and promotion of commissioned activities to improve the provision of retrofit skills in Greater Manchester. He referred to the Green Skills Academy as an important development for the city and wider city region, adding that this provided an opportunity and platform to engage and work with employers to offer trainee and apprenticeship roles. He further discussed the current challenge that existed in regard to qualification recognition and the qualification structure, adding that discussions were ongoing with providers to address these issues. He also discussed the challenge regarding current government funding arrangements, particularly for Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) adding that the current model did not work for this sector and lobbying of government continued on this issue. He further referred to huge pipeline of construction contracts that existed, with construction companies being very busy and noting that this presented a challenge to them releasing existing staff to retrain and learn new green skills. He concluded by stating that both government and industry were yet to understand the scale and pace required to deliver the works required.

The Committee welcomed Councillor Johns, Chair of the Economy and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee. He stated that he welcomed the progress reported since this had last been last considered by the Economy and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee. He said that he recognised the constraints placed on the city's ambitions due to the inadequate and short-term funding arrangements provided by the government. He also acknowledged the challenges described regarding green skills as previously articulated by the Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure. He commented that challenges also existed in relation to the funding of post 16-year-old education and vocational skills, including the number of teachers to teach construction skills. He added that consideration needed to be given to how to include figures in future reports to demonstrate the gaps in the labour supply and narrative on what was being done to address this.

The Assistant Director of Strategic Housing stated that the funding made available to deliver housing retrofit works was to raise properties to a minimum of an energy performance certificate (EPC) rating of C, however the ambition in Manchester was to raise this to B.

The Strategic Director, Growth & Development said that different Social Housing Providers worked collaboratively to deliver retrofitting works, however they also were reliant on grant funding, adding that discussions were ongoing with the GMCA to understand the opportunities via the trailblazer devolution arrangements to support this activity. The Executive Member for Housing and Development added that he would discuss the issue raised with the Manchester Housing Providers Partnership. The Zero Carbon Programme Manager commented that there was an established history of collaborative working across the different Social Housing Providers in the city, adding that strategic consideration was given to the issue of retrofitting as part of their wider asset management strategy.

The Zero Carbon Programme Manager discussed the issue of tracking progress of housing retrofit delivery and how this could be tracked and reported against the established science-based carbon reduction target for the city and consideration would be given to this, noting the capacity issues within the team. She stated that the Council's Climate Change Action Plan would be refreshed in 2025 and they would be involved in those discussions as that work was progressed. She commented that the term retrofit meant different things and there was no standardised definition due to the complexity of this issue as the report articulated.

Decision

To note the report and recommend that future update reports include a visual representation that describes delivery of retrofitting by different tenure so as to understand progress against the stated ambition to retrofit 84,000 homes in the city by the end of 2025.

[Councillor Shilton Godwin declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest in this item as she would be engaging the services of the Your Home Better scheme.]

ECCNSC/24/15 Manchester Green and Blue Strategy and Implementation Plan, including annual update and a report on the Tree and Woodland Action Plan

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Planning, Building Control and Licensing that provided the annual update on the delivery of the Green and Blue (G&BI) Implementation Plan together with information on the Biodiversity Action plan and new draft Tree and Woodland Action Plan.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Describing the governance arrangements and the role of the G&BI Board;
- Places for Everyone, noting that this had been recommended for adoption and would be going to Executive on the 15 March and Council on the 20 March for adoption by Council;
- Local Plan, noting that the preparation of a draft Local Plan would include strong environmental policies around green and blue infrastructure, biodiversity and open space making full use of the up-to-date evidence produced through the G&BI Strategy;
- Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and Urban Green Factor, noting that a Manchester Urban Green Factor approach was being considered for inclusion within the Local Plan to ensure developers were delivering more green infrastructure;
- An update on the G&BI Implementation Plan;
- Information of the Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) design guide;
- Awards and recognition;
- An update on the Tree Action Plan, including findings from the public consultation;
- Providing an update on the delivery of the Manchester Biodiversity Strategy Action Plan; and
- Key priorities for 2024/25.

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

- Highways works and the planting of trees;
- The need to increase leaf cover in the city centre to counter the heat island effect and increase carbon capture;
- Trees on Council owned land and what protections were in place to protect these in the event that the land was sold;
- The need to ensure that urban waterways were free of rubbish and pollution to promote biodiversity, noting the complexity of this due to the different owners;
- The approach to weirs;
- How was the 10% uplift in biodiversity provision that all developments would be expected to provide calculated and how would this be enforced;
- The learning from the delivery of the West Gorton Community 'Sponge' Park should be used in all new developments;
- Water recycling and the use of grey water should be incorporated into all new developments;
- The need to ensure BNG was delivered on site when developments were delivered;
- Noting the importance of planting the correct species of trees;
- Noting the responses from the public consultation, adding that consideration needed to be given to increasing the response rate from different demographic groups; and
- Paying tribute to the Arbor team for their continued advice and support to local Members.

The Director of Planning, Building Control and Licensing stated that the team worked closely with the Highways Department to deliver appropriate tree planting when schemes were delivered. She commented that the importance of tree planting to provide canopy cover and counter the heat island effect, especially in the city centre, was understood. She commented that this was considered as part of the wider sustainable growth agenda to be included in the Local Plan.

The Director of Planning, Building Control and Licensing stated that the Council were the custodians of any high value trees on land that the Council owned, and the importance of trees were recognised in the principles of development. In regard to 'on site' BNG as opposed to 'off site' she said that currently they could not legislate against delivery of BNG 'off site', however the Local Plan would establish a hierarchy of preference.

The Director of Planning, Building Control and Licensing stated that all developers were required to submit a detailed Environmental Standard Statement that provided information on a range of environmental conditions and helped to show how a proposed development would affect the environment. This provided an opportunity to engage with developers on this topic.

The Senior Policy Officer referred to the Our Rivers Our City that was delivered in partnership with the Environment Agency, Natural England and United Utilities. He said that the interconnectivity of the water network was recognised with dialogue with different authorities had been initiated. He further advised that weirs were a barrier to biodiversity and the removal of these promoted connectivity between different

waterways and subsequently supported the local ecology. He further commented that the removal of these also contributed to flood resilience work. He advised that a bid had been submitted for the Medlock Project to improve connectivity and an update on this would be provided to the Committee at the appropriate time. He commented that if Members were interested, he would facilitate a walk along the Medlock to describe the ambitions.

The Planning and Infrastructure Manager commented that the Environment Agency were the principal responsible body to deal with issues of pollution in waterways, adding that Our Rivers Our City included consideration of pollution.

The Senior Policy Officer described that discussions were also ongoing across boundaries regarding tree planting and made reference to the work with Salford to identify cross boundary locations that would be suitable for tree planting. He stated that a long-term approach was being taken to the location of tree planting to increase canopy cover with a refreshed methodology to undertake a tree audit and report the increase in canopy cover.

The Neighbourhoods Team Lead, Grounds Maintenance commented that the importance of native trees was understood however consideration was given to climate resilience when selecting tree species. He added that this approach was undertaken in consultation with national experts.

The Principal Policy Officer provided a detailed response that described how the 10% uplift in biodiversity would be calculated based on the metrics prescribed in the national guidance. She commented that these would be included in any subsequent planning conditions or Section 106 agreements with developers. She said that the monitoring of these sites, including off site locations that would be required to be registered, will be monitored for the subsequent thirty years, noting that the Ecology Unit would be upscaled to support this activity.

Decision

To note the report.

ECCNSC/24/16 Update on The Management And Provision Of Allotments

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) that provided an overview of the provision and management of allotments in Manchester.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Discussion of the current position and progress against Allotments Objectives;
- The approach to increasing access to the use of allotments and food growing spaces;
- Improvement to the quality of provision to ensure allotment sites were welcoming and accessible to all;
- The approach to ensuring sustainable practice; and
- Next steps.

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

- Welcoming the work described and acknowledging the work undertaken by all officers involved in the work described;
- Welcoming the decision to reduce plot sizes to increase uptake;
- Welcoming the work to return to use derelict plots;
- Had there been any analysis of the cost-of-living crisis and the use of allotments by residents to grow their own food;
- Was consideration given to increasing the number of allotments and using other available green space for food growing opportunities;
- Noting the current waiting lists and the level of unmet need; and
- The use of pesticides, and had consideration been given to introducing an organic only policy across the city.

The Deputy Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods spoke of the many benefits offered by allotments. These included health and wellbeing, developing and strengthening community groups, supporting biodiversity and contributing the actions to address climate change.

The Parks Lead address the Committee by paying tribute to her colleague Sam Simpson who had been involved in the work described and who had sadly passed away last May. She wished to place on public record her recognition and appreciation of this work and the important contribution Sam made to the team.

The Parks Lead stated that the report described the positive progress that had been achieved to date to understand the use of allotments, including the donation of excess produce to local food banks. She said that all opportunities for increasing provision were considered, noting the correct use and balance of green space needed to be achieved. She said that these opportunities would be explored through the local Neighbourhood Teams in close consultation with the local community.

The Strategy Manager, Parks commented that demand for allotments had increased, hence the work to maximise plot space on those existing allotment sites. He stated that this increase in demand was as a result of a number of factors, including an increase in population and the cost-of-living crisis. He commented that the introduction of the improved data management system would help improve turnover rates and help address issues when plots were left uncultivated. He further noted the comment from a Member and stated that any local issues could be picked up following the meeting.

The Parks Lead stated that local volunteer societies were important in the promotion of best practice on allotment sites, recognising that a lot of good work was already done in relation to the use of pesticides. She said that the ambition was to scale up this work and develop and set of principles for all sites that included actions to increase and support biodiversity.

The Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods commented that the work described needed to be considered in the wider context of the Manchester Green and Blue Strategy that had previously been discussed earlier on the agenda. She commented that appropriate consideration needed to be given to expanding

allotment provision across the city when considering wider developments and the use of associated green space.

The Deputy Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods commented that due consideration to land ownership had to be given when considering alternative sites. The Director of Neighbourhood Delivery added that issues of land contamination also needed to be taken into account when identifying potential alternative sites for food growing opportunities.

The Deputy Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods concluded by informing the Committee that Manchester Metropolitan University were undertaking a research study in Rusholme into the use of green space and he would circulate information on this work to the Committee for information.

Decision

To note the report.

[Councillor Shilton Godwin declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest in this item as she is a plot holder at the Cleveleys Avenue site.]

ECCNSC/24/17 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 commented that she would be speaking with relevant Executive Members and Officers to scope the Work Programme for the new municipal year.

Decision

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