

Economy Scrutiny Committee – District Centres Subgroup

Minutes of the meeting held on 19 December 2018

Present:

Councillor Shilton Godwin – in the Chair
Councillors Hughes, Kirkpatrick and Madeleine Monaghan

Councillor Sheikh, Assistant Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration
Councillor Lynch, Ward Councillor for Northenden
Councillor Mary Monaghan, Ward Councillor for Northenden
Councillor Russell, Ward Councillor for Northenden
Councillor Reid, Ward Councillor for Gorton and Abbey Hey

Dr Steve Millington, Institute of Place Management (IPM), Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU)
Gareth Roberts, IPM, MMU
Chloe Steadman, IPM, MMU

Apologies: Councillor Connolly

ESC/OSG/18/09 Minutes

Decision

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2018.

ESC/OSG/18/10 Vital and Viable Neighbourhoods - Place Management Pilots Progress Report

The Group considered the report of the Strategic Director (Development) which provided Members with an update on progress with the District Centre Place Management Pilot projects that were being delivered by the Institute of Place Management (IPM) at Manchester Metropolitan University, with the support of the Council. The Place Management Pilots were a key aspect of the work programme overseen by the District Centres Subgroup, and were considering new opportunities to engage local stakeholders and enhance the quality of Manchester neighbourhoods.

The report, which was accompanied by a presentation, summarised the outcomes of the Northenden and Gorton Place Management Pilots, both of which had reached the final report stage.

Dr Millington referred to the main points and themes within the report which included:-

- Work to identify the most effective policy approach the Council and its partners could take to promote successful centres in Manchester;
- The approach to the Place Management Pilots;
- A description of the Northenden Place Management Pilot and an overview of the recommendations;
- A description of the Gorton Place Management Pilot and an overview of the recommendations; and
- Noting that once the reports for all four pilots were available, it was suggested that the Council review all recommendations and determine key general policy and practice to be considered across the city.

Some of the key points that arose from the discussions with Ward Councillors were: -

- Northenden Ward Councillors welcomed the report and the work undertaken by the IPM, noting that there were many positive and unique aspects to the area that needed to be promoted, and the need to engage with and involve more residents in this activity;
- What was being done to promote the evening economy in Northenden, noting that the footfall data indicated a significant decline in the evening; and
- Welcoming the collective effort and dedication from Ward Councillors, officers and local resident groups that had contributed to the improvements experienced in Northenden.
- Gorton Ward Councillors felt attendance at the Gorton workshop was low, and were confident that a further workshop could improve engagement with local groups;
- Although the report suggested that Gorton lacked a central hub, the market was very popular with local residents;
- Welcoming the inclusion of the shops along Hyde Road in the study, commenting that they presented a visual disamenity in the area;
- The relevant Executive Member should look at the legislation relating to shops using the pavement in front of their store to display goods, and where necessary use enforcement powers to prevent this;
- There was a need to improve the food offer such as cafés and restaurants in the centre of Gorton;
- What was the purpose of the report and how much had it cost and how would the report be used to drive improvements and influence change in the Gorton area;
- Noting that people were moving into Gorton as neighbouring areas were becoming increasingly expensive and this provided an opportunity and stimulus for regeneration and redesigning the local offer to ensure it met the needs of the local population, including older residents; and
- Consideration should be given to managing the balance of the centre, particularly given the potential impact of the very large Tesco.

The Chair provided all of those present with the background and rationale as to why the Subgroup had been established, and recommended that the presentation that had been delivered by the IPM at the September meeting be circulated to the Ward Councillors present. The Strategic Director (Development) commented that the Gorton area had been identified to be included in the pilot study as it was recognised that the area required investment similar to that experienced in Harpurhey. He

reported that the investment in Harpurhey had delivered positive outcomes for the local area, supported by locating public services in the area. He said that the work of the Subgroup and the recommendations that would arise would inform future policy decisions. He advised that the Subgroup should consider inviting the relevant Executive Members to a future meeting to discuss and prioritise resources to support its recommendations.

Dr Millington responded by saying that he acknowledged the comment regarding the Gorton workshop. He said that the methodology used in the production of these reports was recognised nationally, however, noting the low turnout the report did specifically recommend that the event be run again. In response to a comment from a Member he clarified that the purpose of the study was not for the IPM to prescribe or dictate a list of actions for each district centre, but rather to provide residents and stakeholders with the data and evidence to stimulate local discussions and support the empowerment of residents and stakeholders to devise their own actions and priorities.

The Strategic Director (Development) confirmed that another Gorton workshop would be organised taking into account the comments from the Ward Councillors and a date for this would be agreed and circulated. Dr Millington further commented that his team would meet with the Members, the Neighbourhood Team and local stakeholders to explain the project and answer any questions prior to the event taking place. The Chair welcomed this suggestion.

The Neighbourhood Officer (South Area Team) informed the Subgroup of the work delivered to engage with residents and local businesses in the Northenden ward following publication of the report. She said the report provided an excellent platform to engage with as many residents and local businesses as possible. She reported that a variety of community events had resulted in the securing of funding to support a local Christmas event and the establishment of a local market. She informed Members that the collection of footfall data would be shared with local businesses to evidence the benefits to the local economy of such events.

The Neighbourhood Officer (South Area Team) further commented that to improve the evening footfall and support the evening offer they worked closely with developers to plan the high street. In addition, a new theatre would be opening in the new year that would attract people into the area and the local area offered a number of very good restaurants that supported the promotion of Northenden village as an attractive destination.

The Neighbourhood Manager (South Area Team) stated that, in addition to ward coordination and local forums, a specific group would be established in the new year to progress the findings of the report, commenting that the report had already been shared with local stakeholders. The Planning and Infrastructure Manager responded to a comment from the Chair regarding the importance of sharing footfall data with local businesses by stating that consideration would be given as to how this would be shared in a meaningful and informative manner. The Strategic Director (Development) added that this data, in particular increased footfall data as a result of events, was very compelling evidence to meaningfully engage with stakeholders to promote and establish a sense of place and transform an area.

The Strategic Director (Development) welcomed a comment from a Member that a local resident had coined the term Riverside Village to describe Northenden. He stated that consideration needed to be given to exploring the opportunities to improve the cycling and walking links and signage along the river to adequately connect Northenden to its neighbouring Manchester wards. The Chair commented that she had obtained evidence from a study undertaken in London as to the benefits of this approach and requested that the Scrutiny Support Officer circulate this information.

The Planning and Infrastructure Manager confirmed that funding had been provided for this research and reported that the evidence arising from this work would inform a range of actions for Gorton that would enable residents and stakeholders to stimulate and generate change. He also confirmed that the report had been shared with the local Neighbourhood Team and they would be invited to future meetings to contribute to the discussions and share their experience.

The Assistant Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration stated that he welcomed the report, commenting that the agents of change were local people and businesses who were engaged with and empowered to influence their local area. He described the success experienced in Levenshulme over recent years, describing that this had been driven by local residents. He said that if Members were interested he could facilitate meetings with those involved in the successful Levenshulme market to share good practice.

Decisions

The Subgroup :-

1. Recommend that another Gorton workshop be arranged at the earliest opportunity;
2. Recommend that prior to the Gorton workshop taking place, representatives from the Institute of Place Management meet with ward councillors and the Neighbourhood Team to ensure that the right people are invited to the workshop;
3. Request that the Scrutiny Support Officer circulates the report on walking and cycling that was referred to by the Chair to those Members present;
4. Recommend that consideration be given as to how footfall data is shared with local businesses and stakeholders to demonstrate and promote the benefits of local organised events;
5. Recommend that consideration be given as to how public sector partners can be encouraged to locate services in district centres;
6. Request that the Scrutiny Support Officer circulate the presentation that was delivered at the meeting on 11 September 2018 to those Members present;
7. Recommend that consideration be given to how enforcement powers can be used to improve the appearance of commercial premises in Gorton and address the practice of using the public footpath to display goods; and

8. Recommend that officers prepare a summary of the 'quick wins' that have been identified across the pilot projects and that these are shared with all Members to help support and influence change and empower local communities.

ESC/OSG/18/11 Terms of Reference and Work Programme

The Chair informed Members that the date and time for the next meeting would be circulated following consultation with Members. She stated that at the next meeting the group would consider the Harpurhey Place Management Pilot report and the Underserved Communities report.

Decisions

The Subgroup :-

1. Noted that the date and time of the next meeting would be agreed in consultation with Members;
2. Noted that Members would consider the Harpurhey Place Management Pilot report and the report on Under-Served Communities at the next meeting; and
3. Agreed the work programme subject to the above amendment.