

**Manchester City Council  
Report for Information**

**Report to:** District Centres Subgroup – 6 March 2019

**Subject:** Vital and Viable Neighbourhoods / Place Management Pilots  
- Harpurhey District Centre Report

**Report of:** Strategic Director (Development)

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**Summary**

This report provides the Subgroup with an update on progress with the District Centre Pilot projects that are being progressed by the Institute of Place Management (IPM) at Manchester Metropolitan University, with the support of the Council. The Place Management Pilots are a key aspect of the work programme overseen by the District Centres subgroup, and are considering new opportunities to engage local stakeholders and enhance the quality of Manchester neighbourhoods.

The report summarises the outcome of the Harpurhey Place Management Pilot (which has reached final report stage), and provides a brief update on other work.

**Recommendations**

To note the report and to provide any comments on the work to date.

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Wards affected: Chorlton, Chorlton Park, Gorton and Abbey Hey, Harpurhey,

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**Background documents (available for public inspection):**

None

## **1.0 Background**

- 1.1 Previous reports to this subgroup have set out the work programme the council has endorsed, which aims to consider the most effective policy approach the council and its partners can take to promote successful centres in Manchester. The work programme has been developed alongside the Institute of Place Management (based at Manchester Metropolitan University), a body with particular interest in the study and promotion of place management techniques.
- 1.2 A core aspect of the work programme comprises Place Management Pilots in four of Manchester's centres (Chorlton, Gorton, Harpurhey and Northenden). These are exercises that bring together a centre's stakeholders, bring to their attention key evidence relating to activity and character of the centre and agree the actions that could be most beneficial for the centre's performance. There are aspects of this process that are clearly aligned with the Our Manchester approach. The council has a key role to play, but the degree to which an ongoing programme of activity can be agreed and delivered is a function of the level of commitment from other stakeholders. This report provides an update on the development of the Place Management Pilot with particular reference to the work in Harpurhey District Centre.

## **2.0 Manchester Place Management Pilots – Update**

### **Approach to the Place Management Pilots**

- 2.1 Although each centre is different and will warrant a different management approach, there has been a common overall format to the Place Management Pilots, reflecting the IPM's experience in other locations. The Place Management Pilots comprise an initial assessment by the IPM, a stakeholder workshop and a final report of recommendations. The initial assessment considered footfall data, collected through counters installed in each of the centres, and an audit undertaken through a site visit.
- 2.2 For the workshop, it was considered important that an appropriate range of stakeholders were invited. Consideration was given to representatives of local businesses (in particular, local traders and land owners), active community groups, service providers and residents. Lists of invitees were prepared through engagement with the council's Neighbourhood Teams and local members. The workshop itself would take place over the course of two hours. It comprises an initial presentation of the IPM's academic research into place management of centres. The two key pieces of research are the High Street 2020 project (focused on understanding the issues that can determine a centre's success) and Bringing Big Data to Small Users, which sought to bring information regarding centre performance (in particular footfall) to local people so that they are able to make informed decisions on collective place management. This section provided background for workshop attendees, and began generating thought and discussion over the centre's performance.

- 2.3 Next, attendees were asked to work in groups to identify key characteristics and strengths of the centre, which would then be fed back to the wider group. This gave a good sense of the overall range of perceptions of the centre, including the key strengths and opportunities that could provide a basis for action to improve centre performance.
- 2.4 The final section of the workshop urges attendees to consider their role in effecting the changes identified. There is a tendency to assume a lack of control across stakeholders, but the IPM research suggests that, particularly where stakeholders can work effectively as a collective, considerable influence can be exercised at the local level. For example, footfall data may reveal that the centre has visitors at times when most premises are closed. Whilst single traders may feel unable to effectively influence trading hours, acting as a group the traders are the only stakeholders able to address this issue.
- 2.5 Following the workshop, the IPM prepare a report for the centre. This summarises the assessment undertaken by the IPM and the outcomes of the workshop. It also includes a set of recommendations for further action. Based on a conceptual framework developed through the High Street 2020 project, these are organised around the ideas of:
- Repositioning – realigning a centre’s function based on an understanding of its market position;
  - Reinventing – focusing on changing perceptions and image for a centre;
  - Rebranding – using measures around branding and public relations to engage more effectively with a centre’s catchment; and,
  - Restructuring – seeking to change the physical and governance characteristics of a centre.
- 2.6 At the present time, the workshops have been held in Northenden, Gorton and Harpurhey. The report for Harpurhey is attached as an appendix to this report. The workshop in Chorlton is arranged for Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> February and an update on this will be provided at the meeting.

### **Harpurhey Place Management Pilot**

#### *Place Management Pilot Workshop*

- 2.7 The workshop for the Harpurhey Place Management Pilot was held on the afternoon of 25 July 2018 at the Manchester Youth Zone. For this workshop, it was felt that the stakeholder focus should be on centre operators, including the centre management company, traders and local public services. However, a separate event was organised to engage the wider local community (particularly residents). The workshop was attended by 12 people, including:
- Council officers from the Neighbourhood Team, Policy Partnerships and Research, Libraries, the Harpurhey District Office and Community Safety;
  - Local Traders

- The Manchester Youth Zone
- Northwards Housing

2.8 The draft report for Harpurhey has recently been completed is attached at appendix 1. The document has been circulated to ward members and any comments received will be reported at the meeting.

Some of the initial views expressed at the workshop, though, recognised that the range of local services were well- matched to the local catchment, and highlighted the value of co-locating public services (the library, college, youth zone and council office) with the commercial activity in the centre, generating both visitors and a base of workers to generate footfall.

Theme	Overview of findings and recommendations
Repositioning	<p>Findings – Very good footfall figures. The centre is functioning well in meeting the community’s basic needs.</p> <p>Quick wins – Potential to increase visibility of the centre further through marketing activity, repositioning Harpurhey centre from one that fulfils basic requirements to one that is seen as the “centre of the community”, or community hub, in order to build on the already impressive footfall figures.</p>
Reinventing	<p>Findings – Research identified some concerns about crime and community safety, both in terms of reported incidents and perceptions. Appearance is likely to be an issue in respect of perception. Consultation revealed a particular issue with the use of the centre after dark. This could contribute to the low evening usage compared to the daytime.</p> <p>Centre doesn’t attract people from outside its catchment but serves its community very effectively. .</p> <p>Quick wins – Priority should be to focus should be on Improving the appearance of the centre and tackling some of the issues around crime and safety. Longer term, focusing on the prominence of the market and beginning to build the evening economy would be desirable.</p> <p>Hanging baskets and flower beds – perhaps through a bloom event – could be included to enhance appearance, encourage dwell time and increase perceptions of safety. Footfall data should be used to test the impacts of interventions.</p>
Rebranding	<p>Findings – There is scope to develop Harpurhey’s brand and increasing visibility outside its immediate catchment area.</p> <p>Engendering a sense of community, potentially using the market as a focus.</p> <p>Any work needs to follow on from environmental improvements.</p>

	<p>Quick win – develop branding/marketing focusing on Harpurhey’s functionality as a centre that meets the basic needs of the community. The market would seem a suitable focus for this activity. Roll out could be incremental and the local community could be engaged in design and selection of a brand image. The issues of appearance and crime/ safety need to be addressed before any re branding is carried out.</p>
Restructuring	<p>Findings – Needs to build on engaged stakeholders Scope to bring them together in regular meetings. Meetings can review footfall data.</p> <p>Quick win – establish community stakeholder group facilitated by the neighbourhood team/shopping centre manager. From this sub – groups can be established to enact change in particular areas. Understanding and sharing footfall data may offer the opportunity to engage a wider group of stakeholders by developing a mutual understanding of how the centre operates.</p>

### 3.0 Conclusion

- 3.1 The place management pilot workshops carried out to-date have illustrated the diversity of Manchester’s centres.
- 3.2 The engagement of those who attended the workshops has been key to their success, as wider commitment from stakeholders is essential for effective place management. Other than for Harpurhey, it was not always easy to get interest from landowners (who are often not local), and large corporate businesses were also more difficult to engage. Extending the pull of place management exercises to cover these stakeholders is a key challenge. As the next steps are considered for the pilot centre, it may be useful to focus on securing early outcomes that can highlight the value of the approach to all stakeholders, thereby encouraging wider involvement in the process.
- 3.3 As the reports for each centre are produced, there will be a range of actions proposed for each centre. Following publication of each report, it is proposed that the council will review recommendations and consider whether any short term actions should be implemented. Once the reports for all four pilots are available, it is proposed that the council reviews all recommendations and determines key general policy and practice to be considered across the city.