

Economy and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 3 December 2024

Present:

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

Also present:

Councillor Craig, Leader
Councillor Akbar, Executive Member for Finance and Resources
Councillor Hacking, Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure
Councillor Rawlins, Executive Member for Clean Air, Environment and Transport
Councillor White, Executive Member for Housing and Development

ERSC/24/46 Minutes

Decision

That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2024 be approved as a correct record.

ERSC/24/47 Revenue Budget Update

The Committee considered the report of the City Treasurer that provided a high-level overview of the latest budget position for the Council in respect of its 2025/26 budget.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources referred to the points and themes in the report which included:

- Noting that the Council was forecasting an estimated budget shortfall of £101m in 2025/26, £126m in 2026/27, and £164m by 2027/28;
- Mitigations approved in previous budget rounds included approved savings of £32m, the use of c£18m smoothing reserves in each of the three years, and a Council Tax increase of 4.99% (c£11m) a year. After these mitigations the gap reduced to £29m in 2025/26, £41m in 2026/27 and £77m by 2027/28;
- Noting that councils faced a funding gap of £6.2 billion over the next two years, and this needed to be considered in the context of an estimated £24.5 billion in cuts and efficiencies in service spending that councils had made since 2010/11;
- Noting that over the same period the Council had delivered over £440m of savings;
- The 2023/24 outturn position reported to Executive 5 June 2024, reported an overspend of £5.3m. The second monitoring report of 2024/25 was considered by Executive on 13 November, reporting a forecast overspend of £20m. The ongoing implications of this overspend must be considered as part of the budget setting process;

- Consideration of the Government's Autumn Statement, noting that a key headline for Local Government was that Core Spending Power would increase by 3.2% in real terms in 2025/26;
- Noting that Ministers had indicated additional funding would be targeted through a deprivation-based approach; and
- A summary of the budget position, noting that the final budget position for 2025/26 would be confirmed at February 2025 Executive. This would be after the Finance Settlement was received and key decisions confirming the Council Tax and Business Rates tax base to be used to determine the collection fund position had been made in January.

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

- To thank officers for their work over years of under-funding and austerity;
- To welcome the real-term increase in funding, the move to multi-year settlements, which would assist the Council with planning, the continuation of the Household Support Fund and the return to a needs-based assessment by the national Government; and
- Noting that, while there was cause for optimism, there was still some uncertainty about funding and the Council was still facing budget pressures in a number of areas.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources acknowledged that there was still uncertainty about the Council's funding allocation and the formula to be used, noting that the provisional settlement would be announced in two weeks' time, and that a lot of work was needed to address long-term funding issues in Adult Social Care, homelessness and external residential placements for Looked After Children. He advised that the budget item would return to scrutiny in February 2025, when the Council would be in a more informed position.

In response to a question from the Chair about multi-year settlements, the Leader reported that multi-year settlements were expected from the budget year 2026/27 onwards which would provide greater certainty in relation to the Council's medium-term financial strategy and enable the Council to plan over a longer period of time.

Decision:

To note the report.

ERSC/24/48 Growth and Development Directorate Budget 2025-28

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director (Growth and Development) which set out an overview of the services within the Growth and Development Directorate and their key priorities, along with details of the other services under the remit of this Committee. It provided a further update to the Committee on the proposed 2025/26 budget, including details of savings and investment proposals based on the latest overall budget position.

The Committee was invited to consider the officer-developed options which were within its remit and to make recommendations to the Executive before it agreed to the final budget proposals in February 2025.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Service overview and priorities;
- Service budget and proposed changes;
- Commissioning and procurement priorities;
- Workforce implications;
- Equality and anti-poverty impact; and
- Future opportunities, risks and policy/strategy considerations.

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

- To request clarification on the proposals in relation to LED street lighting;
- The impact of the recently-announced 2029 deadline for resolving building safety issues on the Building Control team;
- The impact of the Government's plans for leasehold reform on the Council's income as the freeholder of residential properties; and
- The importance of funding for the Manchester Adult Education Service (MAES) and requesting clarification on the reference to diversifying income.

The Director of Highways clarified that the proposal was to dim street lighting, not to switch lights off or reduce the hours that they were lit. He advised that the proposal was to dim all street lighting by one classification across the whole city, although it was also possible to implement this in certain areas.

The Strategic Director (Growth and Development) advised that there were a number of new building safety regulations and requirements which were having a big impact on Building Control and other parts of the Council including Housing Operations and Strategic Housing and that work was taking place to build staff resources and upskill staff to deal with these. She advised that these assumptions were built into the budget and that, while there were challenges, including having to compete with the private sector to recruit to vacant posts in Building Control, the Council was confident that it could address the new requirements. She informed Members that income from residential freehold was only a small part of the income from the investment estate and that, while an assessment would need to take place of the impact of any changes, it was not expected to have a significant impact on the overall budget for the investment estate. She acknowledged the pressures on the MAES budget and advised that the service was looking at additional provision, for example, additional English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses and diversifying, highlighting the internal training courses that it was now providing.

Decision:

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

ERSC/24/49 Our Manchester Strategy 2025-2035

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Chief Executive that provided an update on the development of the new Our Manchester Strategy for the city covering the period 2025 to 2035. It built on a previous report to the six scrutiny committees in July 2024.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background, noting that The Our Manchester Strategy 2025 was the ten-year strategy for the city and was due to expire in 2025;
- Providing a summary of the second round of engagement activity;
- The findings that were most relevant to the remit of the Committee;
- An overview of the new strategy, noting that the OMS would focus on twelve priorities over the next ten years; and
- Following formal approval, the OMS 2025-2035 would be launched in April 2025.

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

- That 12 was quite a high number of priorities and the challenge of communicating these so that they were memorable and could be understood by residents;
- Ensuring that preventing young people from becoming NEET (not in Education, Employment or Training) and supporting those who were NEET be reflected in the Strategy, including noting the importance of sufficiency in post-16 education;
- To welcome that work had been undertaken to mitigate the under-representation of some groups, such as young people and Asian communities, and whether there were any lessons learnt from this;
- Making the Strategy more specific to Manchester;
- The importance of better income levels and well-paid jobs in improving living standards and that earning levels should be referenced in the priority "Have a growing economy that provides jobs and opportunities for everyone";
- Reviewing the scrutiny report templates to reflect the refreshed Strategy;
- To welcome the commitment to plain text and readability; and
- Timescales for this work.

The Head of City Policy reported that the intention had been to have a manageable number of priorities, while reflecting the complexity of the city and the range of issues that people had raised in the engagement, commenting that the first Our Manchester Strategy had had 64 priorities under five themes. He reported that a key outcome from the stage 1 consultation was that people wanted to participate and be supported to engage with what was happening in the city and consideration was being given to how to do this, noting that there was a lot of good practice already taking place in Manchester, for example, in relation to Community Health Equity Manchester, Child Friendly City and Making Manchester Fairer. He reported that his service was working with the Communications Team to think about the wording and ensure the use of Plain English, advising that they were looking at having a public-

facing document and other documents aimed at partner organisations. In relation to the comment about NEET young people, he advised that each priority would have more detailed information below it so this point could be made more explicit there. He agreed to review the wording of priority 8 (“Have a growing economy that provides jobs and opportunities for everyone”), in light of the Chair’s comments about the importance of well-paid jobs for residents. He reported that, having looked at the strategies of other cities, what other cities and their residents wanted was quite similar to Manchester but the more detailed sections under each of the priorities would include more Manchester-specific information, and the city would be reflected in the look and feel of the document. In response to a question from the Chair, he advised that the Council would undertake work to realign itself with the new Strategy, and that this would include aligning the scrutiny reports and process with the Strategy.

The Principal Policy Officer explained that the stage 1 consultation had taken place over a longer period of time and had included a lot of engagement with young people, including through colleges, universities and family centres, and had also included consideration of data from other consultations, such as the Child Friendly City work. She reported that the stage 2 consultation had taken place over a shorter period of time, playing back the data from stage 1, but had included libraries, which were frequented by young people and families. She reported that the number of languages into which the survey was translated had been increased from five to seven in phase 2.

The Leader advised that more specific detail would be incorporated into the action plan, which would have measurable actions that the Council and its partners could work towards, and that NEET and post-16 places would feature within the actions. She reported that the intention was that the Strategy would not be so time-specific that it needed to be refreshed within a couple of years, whereas the action plan could include shorter and medium-term actions and could then be refreshed in five years’ time, without the Strategy itself having to be refreshed. She advised that the language in the Strategy was still being tweaked based on feedback, commenting that it was hoped to receive further feedback from the six scrutiny committees this week. She reported that the Strategy would be launched in April, following approval by the Executive and Council, and that a revised version would be circulated to Members prior to this.

Decision:

To note the work to develop a new Our Manchester Strategy for the city, subject to the above comments.

ERSC/24/50 Lessons Learned from Highway Projects Delivery

The Committee received a report of the Director of Highways which provided a broad overview of lessons learned from the delivery of recent Highways Projects. It sought to highlight the challenges experienced and, through establishing key themes that had been identified through feedback, set out measures to be implemented aimed at improving future project delivery.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Recognising positive aspects of delivery;
- Projects considered and key themes, which were:
 - Improved communication and engagement;
 - Strengthened governance for better decision-making;
 - Realignment of Highway Service functions;
 - Greater understanding of project roles, responsibilities and powers; and
 - Enhanced project processes;
- Challenges and issues in relation to these five themes; and
- Measures and actions to be implemented in relation to these themes.

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

- To welcome that the service was taking steps to address issues that had arisen in previous projects, in particular the integration of design and delivery, and work to improve communications and embed a continuous learning process, noting that the Committee would monitor progress in future reports;
- The importance of straight-forward, Plain English communication;
- Communication with contractors and the use of enforcement and penalties for contractors;
- The importance of officers being approachable and willing to listen to concerns; and
- The importance of officers having an overview of the wider context of all the schemes happening in an area, rather than just one specific project, so that they could respond fully to residents' questions.

The Director of Highways acknowledged Members' points. He recognised the importance of the specialist knowledge of officers in this area as well as the need for wisdom in the approach taken, advising that training and development for officers would focus on 'Our Manchester' behaviours. He outlined the intention to make communications an integral part of highways projects, through the creation of a Highways Communication Team. In response to a Member's question, he advised that post-implementation reviews were currently carried out on an ad hoc basis but in future would be built into every major project. He recognised Members' comments about the wider context of other highways schemes, broader strategic transport aims and influencing culture change and advised that the Highways Communication Team would be responsible for communicating with and getting buy-in from residents and businesses in relation to strategic transport as well as highways. In response to a Member's question, he advised that Environmental Impact Assessments were carried out and that further information could be provided. He informed Members that staff training and development would include their role in enforcing contractual conditions and that contractual conditions had been strengthened in relation to the removal of contractors from lists and sites when they were not performing to the required standard. In response to a question about the vacant Head of Service for Highways Projects post, he advised that the intention was to advertise the vacancy early in the new year. In response to a question from the Chair, he informed Members that there was a handover point when a project was passed over for business-as-usual management and maintenance but that issues picked up in the

post-implementation project review would be passed back to the Design and Delivery Team.

Decision:

To note the information provided.

ERSC/24/51 Selective Licensing – Results of Public Consultation 2024

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director (Growth and Development) which provided an evaluation of the recent public consultation undertaken in areas within Cheetham, Crumpsall, Harpurhey, Longsight, Miles Platting & Newton Heath and Moss Side to establish whether the designation of a Selective Licensing scheme was required in these areas.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Selective Licensing rolling programme to date;
- Public consultation and the analysis of survey responses;
- Formal representations;
- The evidence base;
- Property condition;
- Next steps; and
- Future Private Rented Sector (PRS) licensing schemes.

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

- To welcome the report, the proposals and the future direction of travel;
- Concern about the condition of some homes in the PRS, the impact on people's mental health and physical health of living in poor conditions and the powerlessness of tenants;
- That more areas would benefit from Selective Licensing, for example, in the Fallowfield and Withington wards;
- Enforcement action and criminal prosecutions;
- Waste disposal, including whether information on this was provided in other languages; and
- That the proposed license conditions should include gender-neutral pronouns ('they') when referring to landlords and should specify that homes should be free from damp and mould.

The Executive Member for Housing and Development reported that Selective Licensing gave the Council powers to proactively inspect homes in the designated areas where there were known to be issues with housing conditions, rather than relying on tenants to make a complaint, noting that tenants might be worried about retaliatory evictions if they complained. He welcomed the Renters Rights Bill which was going through Parliament and would protect tenants from retaliatory evictions. He recognised the importance of addressing damp and mould issues and confirmed that the Council would use the Selective Licensing programme to address this.

The Compliance and Enforcement Specialist reported that, following an enforcement notice being served, this progressed to a civil penalty, which could be a charge of up to £30,000, or prosecution, and the Council was committed to pursuing these further actions where appropriate. In response to a question about support for tenants, she reported that there were Community Engagement Officers within the Housing Compliance and Enforcement Team who provided support, in particular for vulnerable tenants who struggled to engage with processes, and that advice services were commissioned through Shelter, with consideration now being given to the further development of advice services with the introduction of the Renters Rights Bill.

The Head of Compliance, Enforcement and Community Safety reported that a significant amount of work was taking place in relation to communications on waste disposal and ensuring that the messages were accessible for all residents, either through translations or pictorial messages, and that this would be linked in with the work on Selective Licensing.

The Chair reported that the Committee had consistently supported Selective Licensing. He advised that a strong case had been made for the introduction of Selective Licensing in the areas set out in the report and he recognised the work of officers in putting together the evidence base. He requested that, when the Renters Rights Bill became law, a note be circulated to the Committee outlining the implications of this, with a particular focus on the roles and responsibilities of the Council.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Executive Member for Housing and Development advised that consideration was being given to how the Selective Licensing programme and the voluntary Good Landlord Charter scheme could work together to drive up housing standards. In response to a further question, he clarified that decisions on whether Selective Licensing could be extended to more than 20% of the city's PRS or geographical area would now be taken locally by the Mayor of Greater Manchester, rather than by the Secretary of State, but that the Council would still need to make the case and provide evidence to support this, if it was deemed necessary. He drew Members' attention to the section in the report on the future approach to discretionary licensing and stated that all powers available would be used to ensure that residents had safe, well-managed, good quality homes. In response to a Member's question about how more landlords could be encouraged to sign up to the Good Landlord Charter, he advised that it provided a kitemark of quality and also that discussions were taking place at a Greater Manchester level about potentially linking this with housing benefit, although this was still at an early stage. In response to a Member's comments, he advised that he would support proposals for greater regulation, such as licensing for all landlords, and highlighted that rental properties would need to be upgraded to an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of C by 2030. He clarified that an area could be re-designated when the 5-year period of Selective Licensing came to an end but that the experience so far indicated that housing in a Selective Licensing area had usually improved by the time the 5-year period came to an end.

Decisions:

1. To note the consultation findings for the introduction of Selective Licensing for privately rented properties identified in Section 3.3.
2. To commend the 9 areas detailed in Maps 1 to 9 (Appendix 1) for designation in February 2025, together with the licence conditions (Appendix 6) under the Housing Act 2004 Part 3 Selective Licensing.
3. To note that, following the decision to introduce a Selective Licensing scheme, a statutory public notification period of three months is required prior to the implementation of the scheme.
4. To support the future direction of travel for discretionary licensing once the rolling programme designations come to an end.
5. To request that, when the Renters Rights Bill becomes law, a note be circulated to the Committee outlining the implications of this, with a particular focus on the roles and responsibilities of the Council.

[Councillor Northwood declared a personal interest as her employer, Citizens Advice, was referred to as a source of information.]

ERSC/24/52 Overview Report

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

Decision:

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

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Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 3 December 2024

Present:

Councillor Hitchen (Chair) – in the Chair

Councillors L Bell, Dar, Good, Iqbal, Ludford, Ogunbambo, Rawson, Sheikh, Whiston and Wright

Also present:

Councillor Midgley, Statutory Deputy Leader

Councillor Bridges, Deputy Leader

Councillor Akbar, Executive Member for Finance and Resources

Councillor Hacking, Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure

Kate Green, Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester for Safer and Stronger Communities

Chief Superintendent David Meeney, Greater Manchester Police

Alex King, CityCo

Lennie Kinsella, Mustard Tree

Laura Taggart, Change, Grow, Live

Abi Hardy, Change, Grow, Live

Apologies: Councillors Azra Ali, Appleby and Doswell

CESC/24/51 [14:00-14:05] Minutes

Decision: That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2024 be approved as a correct record.

CESC/24/52 [14:05-14:35] Crime and Policing

The committee considered a report of the Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester, which provided a highlight report of crime and policing issues in Manchester.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Recently released Home Office crime figures for 2023 show a reduction in overall crime and an increase in solved crime rates across Greater Manchester;
- Performance across call handling and incident response times;
- Public confidence and feelings of safety;
- Grants received by the Council to support community safety services and initiatives, including the Home Office's Safer Streets Fund;
- Neighbourhood policing activities;
- GM's ambition to eradicate death and life-changing injuries on roads by 2040, while reducing it by 50% by the end of the decade and improving transport safety through the TravelSafe Partnership;
- Work to bring communities together and to respond to community concerns in respect of international conflicts and national and local public disorder;

- Violence reduction and safety within the night-time economy; and
- Work to achieve race equality, including a new Achieving Race Equality report for 2024 and expanding the Community Innovation Hub model to provide a consistent engagement mechanism.

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

- Shift patterns within neighbourhood policing;
- Neighbourhood policing abstractions, whereby officers were moved from their assigned neighbourhood to tackle other areas and incidents;
- Staffing levels within neighbourhood policing;
- Road policing;
- What work was being done to increase perceptions of safety and how progress was monitored;
- How the Safer Streets Fund helped to improve feelings of safety within the city centre;
- Call handling;
- Responses to victims and the support provided;
- How confident GMP were in the new neighbourhood policing model;
- What was being done to standardise, monitor and improve communication between GMP and ward councillors; and
- Retail crime, and what was being done to assure victims that crimes of this nature were taken seriously.

The committee welcomed the Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester for Safer and Stronger Communities to the meeting. The Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester informed the committee that a new Police and Crime Plan was being finalised for 2024-2029 and would be published before the end of the year following extensive public and stakeholder engagement. This would present a clear picture of the issues important to Greater Manchester residents and would reinforce the current principles to keep people safe, reduce harm and offending and to strengthen communities and tackle inequality. The Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester acknowledged that the city region was busy and complex and that it was important to reassure communities that they could have confidence and faith in the police. She explained that there was a focus on equity, inclusion and children and young people, with an emphasis on child-centred policing. She recognised the diversity in Manchester and that different communities experienced policing and community safety differently, acknowledging challenging events over the last 12 months to which she credited the exemplary partnership response, particularly to disorder over the summer.

The Chief Superintendent, GMP stated that a key priority for the force was responding to incidents quicker and detecting more crimes. He stated that there was a key opportunity for this through neighbourhood policing and that work was being undertaken to review and improve the neighbourhood policing offer across Greater Manchester, with further communications on this expected in spring 2025.

The Deputy Leader highlighted improvements in policing, demonstrated through recent statistics, and recognised the need to provide confidence to residents to report

incidents. He acknowledged challenges around staff turnover within GMP and suggested that an engagement session could be held with members in the spring to understand the information and communication needed at ward-level. He explained that he had met with GMP to discuss the needs and complexities of the city of Manchester and had received a positive response to this. He also commended the Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester for her work in championing equality.

In response to members' queries regarding neighbourhood policing, the Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester acknowledged that this needed to be the bedrock of GMP's work. The Chief Superintendent, GMP explained that the neighbourhood policing model consisted of PCSOs on the ground, neighbourhood crime teams undertaking investigations and Prevention Hubs which looked at longer-term issues to identify solutions and worked with partners to achieve this. He stated that this model was implemented in Manchester in 2024 and included smaller teams to cover individual areas with deployable resources available to provide greater coverage. The Chief Superintendent, GMP explained that the force was one of few in the country to introduce a performance framework to manage and govern operations, including the abstraction of neighbourhood resources. He stated that in certain circumstances, abstractions were non-negotiable and were used more so in planned events. He also advised the committee that there were 139 neighbourhood policing posts across the city of Manchester, with 11 of these unfilled. Six officers were in the process of taking up these posts within the next six weeks and once in post, there would be a vacancy factor of approximately 3% which was less than the 5% which the force usually operated on.

The Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester explained that a significant uplift was given in the previous financial year for roads policing officers and there had been successes in improving safety on roads and an increase in the seizure of uninsured vehicles and tackling illegal driving. She recognised that this area was important to the public and that consideration would continue to be given as to how this team was resourced.

The Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester stated that work was being undertaken on gender-based violence and how women and girls felt safe, particularly on public transport. This included improving CCTV and lighting at bus and tram stops and providing an uplift in the number of Transport Safety Officers. She also highlighted work within the nighttime economy, such as the Good Night Out Guide; work with student unions; and the Get Me Home Safely campaign. The committee was advised that the Greater Manchester Police and Community Safety Survey was used to track and monitor feelings of safety and to identify which communities did not feel safe. The Chief Superintendent, GMP also explained that thorough investigations helped to reinforce feelings of safety and stated that the force was standardising communications with all communities through GMP's free community messaging service 'Bee in the Loop'.

The committee was informed that districts in Greater Manchester could inform the bid for the Safer Streets Fund, and this was used to increase visible policing and to provide wider support in tackling violence against women and girls through initiatives like the StrutSafe app.

The Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester stated that GMP tracked and logged calls that were ended before being picked up by an operator. She also highlighted online channels of reporting in non-emergency situations.

Members were advised that it was difficult to understand the individual experiences of victims but there was a clear process as to how they were approached and treated to ensure confidence.

The Chief Superintendent, GMP emphasised his commitment to listening to neighbourhood police officers and stated that supervisors had been tasked with reviewing their own communication and engagement with officers. He also explained that the new model maintained an appropriate amount of rest days for officers.

In response to a query regarding communication with ward councillors, the Chief Superintendent, GMP highlighted that newsletters for north, central and south Manchester had been circulated in October and would be provided monthly going forward. He welcomed any feedback that members might have on this. The Deputy Leader explained that significant work had been undertaken and there had been improved communications with ward councillors regarding serious incidents in their areas. He recognised the importance of this and explained that a meeting would be scheduled with GMP and members to understand their needs around communication.

With regard to retail crime, the Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester echoed the Chair's comments on the impact of this on victims. She explained that she worked closely with the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers (USDAW) on their campaign for abusing shopworkers to be made a criminal offence, which the government had committed to. She stated that a Retail Crime Steering Group was established and made up of retailers, GMP, the Community Safety Partnership and GMCA with the aim of offering support and improving confidence amongst shopworkers. She also highlighted that shopworkers could upload CCTV footage of any incidents directly to GMP.

In concluding the item, the Chair thanked the Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester for her work and attendance at the meeting.

Decision:

That the committee notes the report.

CESC/24/53 [14:35-15:05] Community Safety Update

The committee considered a report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) which provided an update on progress of the Community Safety Partnership in implementing the Community Safety Strategy 2022-25 and meeting its strategic priorities.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background to the Community Safety Partnership;
- An update on the priorities of the Community Safety Strategy 2022-25;
- Further action on recommendations made by the committee's Crime and Antisocial Behaviour Task and Finish Group which took place between September and November 2023;
- Tools and powers available to the Community Safety Partnership to tackle antisocial behaviour;
- Work to raise awareness of hate crimes;
- Recent activities of the Manchester Water Safety Partnership;
- Prevention and early intervention work to keep children and young people safe;
- Tackling serious harm and violence;
- The Complex Safeguarding Hub;
- Work to protect communities through changing offender behaviour and support for those leaving prison;
- Performance data, including the Policing and Community Safety Survey; and
- Next steps.

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

- Tackling antisocial behaviour in district centres;
- How organisations tracked progress of service users and whether counselling was offered;
- The effectiveness of the Partnership's campaign around Bonfire Night;
- Whether there was any uptake in reporting incidents of antisocial behaviour around Bonfire Night;
- Possible factors behind an increase in referrals to the Complex Safeguarding Hub;
- How the Partnership worked with building management companies to tackle antisocial behaviour in short-term lets;
- How the Partnership ensured an intersectional approach to tackling violence against women and girls;
- The effectiveness of the 12 Streets initiative in student areas and whether this would be rolled out to other areas in the city;
- How the effectiveness of the Citywide Alcohol Consumption PSPO would be assessed and whether any considerations were being given to addressing new and emerging antisocial behaviour trends within this;
- Whether the Partnership worked with supermarkets to address rough sleeping outside stores; and
- Requesting a breakdown of serious violence incidents by demographic and geographic location.

Representatives from CityCo, Mustard Tree and Change, Grow, Live attended the meeting to provide overviews of their organisations and the support they provided in partnership with the Council. The committee was informed that CityCo worked to help the private sector tackle antisocial behaviour through training and seminars on topics such as urban exploring, graffiti, street begging, rough sleeping, substance misuse

and the safety of women and girls. This also included problem-solving, hotspot mapping and business crime reduction partnership. A Street Engagement Hub had also been established to provide pathways for the most vulnerable people on the streets to have their complex needs addressed in one place. A multi-agency outreach service was also in operation across the city to connect with individuals engaged in antisocial behaviour, to understand the reasons behind this and to signpost to further organisations such as Change, Grow, Live and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and 1700 interventions had been undertaken in the last year. Change, Grow, Live worked alongside the Hub to provide rapid prescribing and detox support to drug and alcohol users within the same day. In response to a query from a committee member, a representative of Mustard Tree explained that the organisation could see progress with service users through their volunteering programme. He also explained that many staff had lived experience of drug and alcohol addiction and could provide support to service users on a range of areas including pathways for employment and signposting to other organisations. A representative of Change, Grow, Live confirmed that a Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust (GMMH) workers were commissioned through the Street Engagement Hub to link service users with the community mental health team and Change, Grow, Live had a dedicated counselling offer through their recovery support service and a psychology team commissioned through the rough sleepers' drug and alcohol treatment grant.

In response to a member's query, the Deputy Leader acknowledged the issue of antisocial behaviour in district centres and encouraged members and the public to report any incidents, explaining that local intelligence of issues and hotspots was helpful.

The Head of Compliance, Enforcement and Community Safety informed members that a full evaluation of the effectiveness of the Partnership's public safety campaign around Bonfire Night was in progress. She highlighted that there had been reports of antisocial behaviour involving bonfires and fireworks in September, which was earlier than previous years, and that a further information could be provided to the committee once available.

In response to a query regarding Complex Safeguarding Hub referrals, the Head of Compliance, Enforcement and Community Safety explained that this could be a result of greater efforts across the city to increase the understanding of exploitation – particularly criminal exploitation – and stated that an increase in referrals was positive. She also stated that this work would continue in partnership with neighbourhood police officers.

The committee was advised that incidents of antisocial behaviour in short-term lets were addressed following the same process as any other incident. This could involve contacting the property landlord or management company to ensure they adhered to their responsibilities in preventing and addressing antisocial behaviour. The Head of Compliance, Enforcement and Community Safety recognised that this was challenging due to the high turnover of guests within short-term lets and the length of time taken to build an evidence base, but the Council would continue to use the available tools and powers to tackle such incidents.

The Head of Compliance, Enforcement and Community Safety explained that the Partnership had commissioned specific pieces of work to engage with women and girls and to identify activities needed to address their safety within the city.

In response to a query regarding the 12 Streets initiative, the Head of Compliance, Enforcement and Community Safety stated that this had been implemented for some time and positive impacts were being recognised, with no cases requiring final enforcement action. She explained that this initiative was a targeted response to persistent antisocial behaviour in areas of high student populations which meant that the allocated resources could not be used extensively in other areas.

The Strategic Lead (Community Safety) explained that the Citywide Alcohol Consumption PSPO was used as a tool to address street drinking in hotspot areas and to raise awareness of the direct support available in partnership with Change, Grow, Live through signage. She explained that the Council would use specific powers to address street drinking and antisocial behaviour in areas not covered by the PSPO and encouraged members to report any issues to the antisocial behaviour team. Members were also encouraged to share any contacts or intelligence they might have regarding rough sleeping outside of supermarkets.

In response to a request for a more detailed breakdown of serious violence incidents, the Head of Compliance, Enforcement and Community Safety emphasised that ward-level data could be difficult to reflect the true scale of serious violence, particularly in areas where prisons and hospitals were located where data may not be reflective of those who live in the ward. She stated that this could be better demonstrated through narrative to accompany statistics. The committee requested that this breakdown be provided in future reports.

In concluding this item, the Chair thanked representatives from Mustard Tree and Change, Grow, Live; the Community Safety Partnership; and GMP for their work.

Decision:

That the report be noted.

CESC/24/54 [15:05-15:25] Budget 2025/26

The committee considered the report of the City Treasurer that provided a high-level overview of the latest budget position for the Council in respect of its 2025/26 budget. The committee also considered a report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) which presented the current officer-developed budget savings options which are within its remit.

Key points and themes in the reports included:

- Noting that the Council was forecasting an estimated budget shortfall of £101m in 2025/26, £126m in 2026/27, and £164m by 2027/28;
- Mitigations approved in previous budget rounds included approved savings of £32m, the use of c£18m smoothing reserves in each of the three years, and a

Council Tax increase of 4.99% (c£11m) a year. After these mitigations the gap reduced to £29m in 2025/26, £41m in 2026/27 and £77m by 2027/28;

- Noting that councils faced a funding gap of £6.2 billion over the next two years, and this needed to be considered in the context of an estimated £24.5 billion in cuts and efficiencies in service spending that councils had made since 2010/11;
- Noting that over the same period the Council had delivered over £440m of savings;
- The 2023/24 outturn position reported to Executive 5 June 2024, reported an overspend of £5.3m. The second monitoring report of 2024/25 was considered by Executive on 13 November, reporting a forecast overspend of £20m. The ongoing implications of this overspend must be considered as part of the budget setting process;
- Consideration of the Government's Autumn Statement, noting that a key headline for Local Government is that Core Spending Power would increase by 3.2% in real terms in 2025/26;
- Noting that Ministers had indicated additional funding would be targeted through a deprivation-based approach;
- A summary of the budget position, noting that the final budget position for 2025/26 would be confirmed at February 2025 Executive. This would be after the Finance Settlement was received and key decisions confirming the Council Tax and Business Rates tax base to be used to determine the collection fund position have been made in January.
- Providing an overview of the Neighbourhoods directorate and its priorities;
- The service areas within the committee's remit included:
 - Community safety
 - Leisure and events
 - Libraries and galleries
 - Homelessness.
- The gross 2024/25 budget for the service was £122m and the net budget was £53.8m with 960 FTE employees;
- Savings of £400k were proposed for 2025/26 within the Commercial and Events service through increased income, but £375k of this was one-off and would arise from the increased number of concerts at Heaton Park in 2025/26;
- £50k of savings were currently proposed for libraries throughout 2025/26, through a £30k reduction in the existing £1.8m supplies and services budget and a further £20k saving through reduced numbers of subsidised events and programmes across the district libraries and Central Library;
- A proposal to reduce Manchester Active's annual leisure contract amount by 5% (£20k) over two years;
- Proposing to reduce the community safety budget by £15k which was currently uncommitted;
- Savings of £2.2m were proposed within the Homelessness service over three years to be achieved by increasing the number of existing tenancies which are converted to a long-term lease and looking into offering families placements into apartments, therefore reducing placements in temporary accommodation;
- Savings of £198k over three years for Galleries, through a service redesign; not renewing a lease for additional storage space; and reducing mainstream funding to the public programme by £68k over two years;

- Government grants, of which the services within the remit of this committee currently received c£15.6m;
- Workforce implications; and
- Future opportunities, risks and policy and strategy considerations.

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

- What consideration had been given to the impact of increased commercial events at Heaton Park on local residents;
- What plans were in place to ensure sustainable funding beyond 2025;
- Expressing concern over a potential increase in the number of Section 21 evictions before the Renters Reform Bill comes into effect, and querying what contingencies were in place to deal with this;
- Whether the proposal to offer homeless families placements into apartments would still constitute temporary accommodation;
- Whether the Council would allow families with children under the age of 12 to take up accommodation in an apartment if they wanted to;
- Whether landlords were supportive of the proposal to increase the number of existing tenancies which are converted to a long-term lease;
- If the committee could have sight of the Equality Impact Assessment for the proposals;
- The impact of reducing the number of subsidised events in libraries, and how many of these were currently subsidised by the Council;
- Requesting a full analysis of the wider impact of introducing fees for holding events in libraries; and
- How artefacts within Galleries could be showcased to the public more.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources stated that the Council had seen its budget cut by £443m in the fourteen years of austerity under the previous governments and that many local authorities faced the prospect of issuing Section 114 notices. He stated that the new Labour government had inherited the worst public finances since the Second World War, but the Autumn Statement had committed more funding for the public sector, including housing, education and the health service, and a continuation of the Household Support Fund. He explained that the government had committed to multi-year settlements for local government from 2026 and a review of the funding formula to consider deprivation and need, which would provide greater certainty for local authorities when setting the budget. He acknowledged that budgetary challenges in demand-led services, such as social care and homelessness, would take longer to address and the Council was forecasting a £20m overspend. He explained that officers had developed savings proposals to ensure that the Council set a balanced budget for 2025/26 and that the majority of these proposals related to income generation, efficiencies or savings through transformation work which enabled the Council to continue delivering its priorities and services for residents.

In response to a query regarding the impact of increased commercial events at Heaton Park on local residents, the Director of Neighbourhood Delivery explained that some funding for these events had been held for contingencies to deal with issues that might arise. He explained that the Council would work with organisers to

understand how they would manage the events and would be working closely from the New Year with Transport for Greater Manchester and GMP to mitigate any potential risks and, as part of the planning, partners would ensure learning from previous events was used.

The Directorate Head of Finance stated that there had been an increase in the number of time-limited grants that the Council was in receipt of and it was expected that this would be reviewed and rationalised as part of the Local Government Finance Settlement to provide greater clarity and administration of external grants. Further detail on this would be included in the report to the committee in February 2025.

In response to queries regarding savings proposals for the Homelessness service, the Assistant Director of Homelessness welcomed the Renters Reform Bill and the abolition of Section 21 evictions. He recognised the potential for an increase in the number of Section 21 evictions prior to the Bill coming into effect and explained that the government had indicated that New Burdens funding would be available to local authorities to mitigate this impact. There were also indications from government that the current levels of grant funding would be maintained and £233m of funding was available in addition to this, although it was unknown as to how much of this would be allocated to Manchester.

The Assistant Director of Homelessness advised that the Council had no impact on how other local authorities may respond to funding pressures and emphasised that an individual needed a local connection to Manchester in order for the Council to owe them a Homeless Duty. He explained that the Council was able to make a referral to another local authority to which a presenting individual may have a local connection.

Members were informed that the proposal to use apartments for homeless families would constitute social housing tenancies which would be let on an assured or secured basis. This proposal had been developed based on feedback that families would welcome flatted accommodation, especially if it enabled them to live in their desired area. The Assistant Director affirmed that these properties would only be let to families with children over the age of 12 and that sanctions would not be applied if the offer of flatted accommodation was declined. He cited an example of 18 apartment units which had become available in recent weeks where 8 families had taken up an offer.

It was also confirmed that these apartment buildings would be to a maximum of five storeys. A committee member also requested that the Deputy Leader with responsibility for homelessness and the Assistant Director of Homelessness further discussed the possibility of allowing families with children under the age of 12 to take up flatted accommodation where the family was happy to do so.

The Assistant Director of Homelessness stated that 179 properties had either been or were in the process of being converted to long-term leases to date, demonstrating a significant level of interest among landlords due to the security and longevity of business this provided. This initiative did not apply to properties outside of Manchester and alternative rent settings were in place in the south of the city and officers were trying to encourage and incentivise landlords in this area to take part.

The committee was also advised of three accommodation schemes that were due to become available within the coming months, consisting of 16 units at Fulmead; 19 units at Brownley Road; and 24 units at Dickenson Road. The Assistant Director of Homelessness explained that the Council currently made a loss on Housing Benefit subsidy of c.£4k for dispersed single accommodation, meaning that a reduction of 48 units was required in order to make savings, which he was believed was attainable with the new units becoming available.

In response to a member's request, the Directorate Head of Finance explained that Equality Impact Assessments had not yet been undertaken as the options put forward were proposals, but he provided assurance that these would form part of the detailed business case for each proposal taken forward.

In response to queries regarding the proposal to reduce the number of subsidised events in libraries, the Director of Neighbourhood Delivery stated that the service would look to increase income from some events as part of this proposal. He stated that the proposal did not seek to reduce activity within libraries but to maximise income where appropriate across the service and for groups, recognising the importance of these events and activities for communities. He agreed to share further information on the number of subsidised events currently held in libraries.

The Director of Neighbourhood Delivery explained that a report would be submitted to the Art Galleries Committee in February 2025 to outline further details on the process for moving art and artefacts out of storage at Lowry Mill. This would include how Council buildings could be used to showcase or store these works. He noted that this was a complex process and that the Deputy Leader would be engaged on this work. The Deputy Leader echoed these comments, emphasising that this was a significant but important piece of work.

Decision:

That the committee

1. notes the report;
2. welcomes the offer of further information on the number of subsidised events held in libraries; and
3. recommends that a full analysis of the impact of introducing fees for holding events in community/district libraries be undertaken and shared with the committee.

CESC/24/55 [15:25-15:40] Progress update on the development of the Our Manchester Strategy 2025-2035

The committee considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive which provided an update on the development of the new Our Manchester Strategy for the city covering the period 2025 to 2035, building on a previous report to the committee in July 2024.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Phase 1 of public engagement, which took place across Manchester between February and May 2024;
- Phase 2 of public engagement, which took place between September and October 2024 and tested 12 draft priorities structured under the themes of People, Neighbourhoods and City;
- Where engagement sessions took place and partnership boards and stakeholder groups who were consulted;
- 2706 responses were received in the second phase of engagement and between 75% and 85% of respondents agreed with 11 of the 12 priority statements;
- Demographics of phase 2 respondents;
- Key considerations for the Community and Equalities Scrutiny Committee;
- An overview of the new Strategy; and
- Next steps, including approval by Council in March 2025.

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

- Recognising the top 5 priorities that were important to residents;
- How responses varied between different areas in the city;
- What measures were taken to ensure that residents in every ward contributed to the consultation; and
- How figures on the amount of people within individual wards who had responded to the consultation were collected;
- Whether the twelve priorities were now finalised;
- Recognising that many respondents prioritised housing, cleanliness and safety; and
- Whether the priorities were of equal rank and importance.

In response to members' queries, the Head of City Policy explained that the Our Manchester Strategy covered the whole of the city and that the public engagement exercises aimed to speak to as many people across Manchester as possible. He explained that a citywide launch was being planned with partners during April 2025 and that consideration was being given to subsequent events in local areas.

The Head of City Policy stated that residents in all wards had been engaged as part of the phase 1 engagement and targeted work was undertaken with communities and neighbourhoods with a low response rate, including commissioning community groups to engage with hard-to-reach groups. He explained that phase 2 engagement involved testing the key themes that emerged from the first phase and that four in-person events and pop-up sessions had been held across the city in addition to online consultation channels.

In response to a question regarding the low number of in-person responses during phase 2, the Principal Policy Officer clarified that this figure referred to the number of people who completed the survey form at an event. She explained that further feedback was incorporated into the outcomes through conversations between attendees and officers at the events. It was also highlighted that it was not mandatory for survey respondents to provide their postcode, which may affect response figures

for individual wards and areas. The Head of City Policy advised the committee that feedback and comments from other public consultations such as the Child Friendly City work had also been incorporated into the Our Manchester Strategy engagement outcomes.

The Head of City Policy explained that the priority relating to climate change had been reworded to simplify this following public engagement. He stated that the priorities were largely finalised, subject to any further wording changes and feedback from other Scrutiny Committees and forums. Each priority would have a section within the Strategy which would set out additional detail on its delivery. Officers would also be developing an implementation plan which would outline the actions and deliverables for the first two years of the Strategy.

Members were advised that the challenges listed in the draft strategy were not ranked in order of complexity and the priorities were weighted equally across the themes of 'Our People', 'Our Neighbourhoods' and 'Our City'.

In concluding this item, the Chair thanked officers for their work.

Decision:

That the Committee

1. notes the report and the priorities, and
2. welcomes the offer of feedback and breakdown of respondents from phase 1 of the engagement being recirculated to members along with any further information on phase 2.

CESC/24/56 [15:45-15:50] Overview Report

The committee considered a report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit which contained a list of key decisions yet to be taken within the Committee's remit and responses to previous recommendations.

Decision: That the report be noted.

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Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 14 January 2025

Present: Councillor Hitchen (Chair) – in the Chair
Councillors Appleby, L Bell, Doswell, Good, Iqbal, Ogunbambo, Rawson, Sheikh, Whiston and Wright

Also present:

Councillor Midgley, Statutory Deputy Leader
Councillor Davies, Lead Member – Age Friendly Manchester
Nick Clayton, Winning Hearts and Minds
Marie Greenhalgh, Wythenshawe Good Neighbours and Deputy Chair, Age Friendly Manchester Board
Elaine Unegbu, Chair, Age Friendly Manchester Board

Apologies: Councillors Azra Ali, Dar and Ludford

CESC/25/1 Minutes

Decision: That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2024 be approved as a correct record.

CESC/25/2 Age Friendly Manchester - Delivery Progress Update

The committee considered a report of the Director of Public Health which detailed the progress of work to support delivery of Manchester's age friendly strategy *Manchester: a city for life 2023-2028*.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- The background to the strategy, which was launched in November 2023;
- The themes included in the strategy:
 - Being heard and age equality
 - Age-friendly neighbourhoods whether we can all age in place
 - Age-friendly services that support us to age well
 - Age-friendly work, skills and money
- Recruitment to the Age Friendly Manchester Board;
- Work to increase older peoples voice, visibility and involvement;
- Digital inclusion;
- Connecting with the most marginalised older residents;
- Contributions to the North Manchester General Hospital Strategy;
- The LGBTQ+ Majority Extra Care Housing Scheme;
- Social Connections projects in Crumpsall, Cheetham and Gorton; and
- Promotion of Pension Credit and entitlements.

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

- Barriers in recruiting representatives from Asian, South East Asian, African Caribbean communities and from North and East Manchester to the Age Friendly Board;
- The metrics used to measure success of the social connections mapping work in Crumpsall, Cheetham Hill and Gorton and whether this would be used to inform a citywide implementation of the programme;
- How many eligible residents were not claiming pension credit, and what work was being done to reach these people;
- How healthcare provisions helped to ensure reach with older people through this work;
- How walking route mapping work with Manchester Metropolitan University would be used;
- What influence the Council had in ensuring that footpaths were fit-for-purpose and suitable for older people;
- Commending the Age Friendly Manchester Board's manifesto video, and querying how widely this was being shared; and
- Thanking officers for a recent older persons' event held in Newton Heath library.

Introducing the report, the Director of Public Health explained that the age friendly strategy was launched in 2023 with delivery beginning in January 2024. She stated that the report provided an update on progress of this work to ensure that older people had a voice and that equality was addressed through the delivery of age-friendly services and work, skills and income.

Representatives from the Age Friendly Manchester Board, Winning Hearts and Minds and Wythenshawe Good Neighbours attended the meeting and provided an overview of their work to the committee. The committee also considered the Age Friendly Manchester Board's manifesto 'They Call Us Baby Boomers' which was presented through video.

In response to members' queries, the Programme Lead explained that significant outreach work was undertaken with groups and networks in the Asian, South East Asian, African and Afro-Caribbean communities and through the Council's Neighbourhood teams and the voluntary sector. She stated that the Board was made up of diverse representatives but there remained an ambition for greater representation particularly from the disabled community and different areas of the city. Members were advised that the Board had two representatives from a Black Caribbean background, one from the South Asian community and one representative of Wai Yin, a charity supporting Chinese individuals. Members were advised that the Board consisted of 14 members so not every ward in the city could be represented but the Age Friendly Manchester Assembly was diverse and continued to increase

representation. The Programme Lead acknowledged challenges with recruiting representatives from different backgrounds and that there needed to be greater confidence and information for people to take up this role. She stated that plans were in place to share information about the Age Friendly Manchester Board in different languages to increase representation. The Chair of the Age Friendly Manchester Board highlighted the benefit of working collaboratively and cited 'Leg Up' clubs as an example of reaching Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic males.

The Programme Lead explained that the success and outcomes of the social connections programme would be measured qualitatively through engagement with typically hard-to-reach groups. A representative of Winning Hearts and Minds, which collaborated with the Council on the scheme, reiterated this and stated that increased event turnout amongst hard-to-reach groups would be a measure of success and that case studies and examples would be used to highlight successes and to capture nuance. He explained that a celebration event would be planned towards the end of the project with those in receipt of funding, such as the Gorton and Miles Platting projects, which would also provide a forum to share learning.

Members were advised that it was difficult to quantify the exact number of eligible residents who did not claim pension credit. The Lead Member for Age Friendly Manchester explained that initial figures were calculated from national statistics and the Council's own review through the Revenues and Benefits Unit and the campaign to encourage take-up of pension credit was ongoing. The Director of Public Health endeavoured to provide further detail on this following the meeting.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Director of Public Health highlighted the work of Making Manchester Fairer which was the Council's overarching programme to address health inequalities. She stated that anti-poverty work through Making Manchester Fairer and Age Friendly Manchester helped to ensure access to eligible benefits and to better support people from different ethnic groups. It was also highlighted that Making Manchester Fairer was a collaborative effort with the NHS and other partners.

In response to a query regarding work with Manchester Metropolitan University to create and map eight walking routes with age-friendly benches, the committee was advised that this research would be shared across the city and at events to provide an opportunity for learning and to identify how best to implement.

It was recognised that age friendly work was embedded with housing providers but that housing did not feature as predominantly in the age friendly strategy as officers would like and that further work was required on this.

The Programme Lead explained that there was a wealth of monthly activities taking place in neighbourhoods and that different areas had different assets and needs which needed to be worked through with colleagues in Neighbourhoods.

The committee was advised that the Council's Highways service had attended a Board meeting and that continuous communication was in place between them and the Age Friendly Manchester team. It was acknowledged that the suitability of footpaths for older people was an ongoing topic of discussion.

Members commended the Age Friendly Manchester Board's manifesto video and were informed that this had been shared widely on the Council's social media channels. It would also be used as a campaign tool on International Day of Older Persons, which took place on 1 October every year.

The Lead Member for Age Friendly Manchester welcomed members' local knowledge of their communities and the needs and gaps for older people. She commended the work of the Age Friendly Manchester team, which she said was relatively small, and encouraged members to engage with the team at any time.

In concluding this item, the Chair placed on record the committee's gratitude to officers, volunteers and partners for their work on the Age Friendly agenda.

Decision:

That the committee

1. notes the report;
2. requests further information on the number of eligible residents who have applied for pension credit following the recent public campaign;
3. requests that a future report include a map highlighting all programmes, events and initiatives for older people across the city; and
4. agrees that further progress reports be provided every 6 months.

CESC/25/3 Support for people seeking sanctuary who are arriving and living in Manchester

The committee considered a report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) which provided an update on gaining the Local Authority of Sanctuary accreditation, the strategy for people seeking sanctuary which was developed as part of the accreditation process and an update on the support provided to migrants arriving and living in Manchester.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- The Council passed a motion in July 2023 to become a Local Authority of Sanctuary, which was awarded in October 2024, and continues to support a number of people who are seeking sanctuary in the city;
- The Asylum Service, consisting of both contingency hotel and dispersed property accommodation, is provided by Serco on behalf of the Home Office. The Council does not manage or commission this service;

- Support available under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) and the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP);
- Support for Ukrainian nationals;
- Support for Chagossians;
- Support for Hong Kong British Nationals (overseas);
- The work and role of the Regional Strategic Migration Partnership (RSMP);
- Support provided by the Home Office to those seeking asylum in Manchester; and
- The introduction of eVisas as a record of immigration status and the Council's role in raising awareness of this change.

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

- Recognising Manchester's long record of being a city of sanctuary;
- What support the Council provided to residents who needed to move onto an eVisa;
- How the Council monitored the support provided to those in asylum contingency accommodation ran by Serco, and what mechanisms were in place to address concerns;
- The improvements that the Council would like to form part of the Home Office's future contract for asylum accommodation;
- How many people in Manchester were required to transition onto an eVisa;
- The number of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in Manchester operated by Serco;
- The deadline for people to transfer onto an eVisa;
- How the Housing service supported those arriving in Manchester;
- If the Council owed a Homelessness duty to those sleeping outside of the Town Hall;
- Whether there were plans to hold job search drop-in sessions in libraries outside of Harpurhey;
- How the Council identified and understood the culturally appropriate needs of those in asylum accommodation;
- Whether information and guidance on the introduction of eVisas could be shared through Serco;
- What support was provided to those coming to Manchester from other countries not referenced in the report;
- How the 18-month extension of visas for Ukrainian nationals will be implemented and whether the Council had capacity to support this; and
- If the voluntary sector was involved in helping Afghan residents gain skills and work experience.

The Statutory Deputy Leader introduced the report and stated that Manchester had always been a safe and welcoming city, with an array of faith and community groups supporting those seeking sanctuary. She explained the process to becoming an

accredited Local Authority of Sanctuary and that this provided the opportunity for the Council to recognise and reflect on the support already offered. She highlighted the importance of reinforcing a positive message to those seeking sanctuary and thanked officers for their work to achieve the accreditation.

In response to queries regarding eVisas, the Strategic Lead (Homelessness) explained that, to date, work had been undertaken by the team with over 500 households, predominantly from Afghanistan and Ukraine, to support their move to an eVisa. She stated that libraries provided access and support for those moving onto an eVisa and assistance was also available through the Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit, which held drop-in sessions every Thursday.

The committee was informed that any individual with a biometric permit, a resident pass, indefinite leave to remain in the UK, EU settled status or those travelling for work or educational purposes would require an eVisa. The Council was not informed by the Home Office of how many people in Manchester required an eVisa but this was believed to be significant. The Service Lead, North West Regional Strategic Migration Partnership (RSMP) explained that there was no requirement for people arriving in the city to provide an address so it was difficult to understand whether those people remained in Manchester or had moved elsewhere.

It was also confirmed that the expiry date for biometric residence permits was 31 December 2024, and work had been undertaken with VCSE groups to communicate this. The Service Lead, RSMP stated that issues would arise if a resident attempted to re-enter the UK on expired documentation.

Members were advised that significant support and guidance was in place regarding the transition to eVisas and that the RSMP had arranged training for local authorities in the region. The RSMP also worked closely with GM authorities on the homelessness advice provided through Serco. The Strategic Lead (Homelessness) commended the Council's Communications team for highlighting changes to immigration status records and explained that officers also had conversations at a more local level with those affected.

In response to queries regarding Serco, the Strategic Lead (Homelessness) explained that the Council could raise concerns regarding the standard of support provided through regular meetings between the Council's Refugee Lead, Serco, the Home Office, Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and the VCSE sector which reviewed accommodation and was a forum to raise any issues. She also explained that any concerns raised with the Council regarding asylum accommodation were shared with Serco, the Home Office and health services.

The Strategic Lead (Homelessness) explained that figures regarding the number of HMOs managed by Serco in Manchester were held by the Home Office but that the majority of this constituted dispersed accommodation across south Manchester.

The Strategic Lead (Homelessness) acknowledged that the Home Office's Asylum Accommodation and Support Contracts (AASC) were due for renewal in 2029 and stated that the Council would lobby for adequate provisions to be included in this. She recognised a need for improvements in the condition and quality of dispersed accommodation and to ensure sufficient levels of support and an equitable spread of accommodation across the country.

The Assistant Director of Homelessness explained that those granted asylum were given 56 days' notice to leave dispersed accommodation. The Council would open a homeless application under the Prevention Duty once this notice was served and would try to secure alternative accommodation for an individual within this timeframe. The Assistant Director of Homelessness explained that, if this was not possible, the case would progress to the Relief Duty, which provided a further 56 days to source accommodation. If an individual was believed to be in priority need, for example being pregnant or having dependents, a Temporary Accommodation Duty would be owed pending the application of the Relief Duty. In the event that accommodation could not be secured, the case would progress to Main Duty stage.

Members were informed that local connection was not a relevant factor immediately upon presenting homeless. The Assistant Director of Homelessness acknowledged Manchester's appeal to those granted asylum in other areas of the country. He stated that, where a duty was owed, the Council had the power to refer a case back to the local authority area in which an individual was granted their asylum status through a Section 198 referral, although he acknowledged that people often did not wish to return to these areas.

The Assistant Director of Homelessness explained that specialist asylum accommodation had opened in Levenshulme and a Welcome Hub was being funded by the Council and delivered by the charity Mustard Tree. The Council had also helped over 100 households to secure private rented accommodation across Greater Manchester.

In response to a query regarding people sleeping rough outside the Town Hall, the Assistant Director of Homelessness acknowledged the different circumstances affecting these individuals. He reiterated that the Homelessness Duty was owed to those genuinely homeless and that people seeking asylum were not eligible for housing assistance until they received leave to remain in the UK. He advised that the test applied to those presenting as homeless and in need was whether that individual was more vulnerable than the average person who was street homeless. He explained that a number of those sleeping outside the Town Hall met the vulnerability test and were owed a Temporary Accommodation Duty in Manchester irrespective of the area they had come from. He explained that some had been assessed as not being vulnerable, but the Council continued to provide ongoing advice and support to secure their own accommodation and employment and to advise on the realities of the housing market in Manchester.

The Assistant Director of Homelessness explained that an individual would be assigned a priority banding for social housing upon being placed in temporary accommodation and would need to wait for housing to become available. He stated that social housing was awarded to the household which held the highest priority banding for the longest amount of time and Mustard Tree had been asked to emphasise this to their service users to manage expectations. The Strategic Lead (Homelessness) advised that people seeking asylum should access accommodation and support directly from the Home Office.

The Statutory Deputy Leader commended the Homelessness service for their response to those sleeping outside the Town Hall and highlighted the need to follow legislation and guidelines. She reiterated the Council's commissioning of Mustard Tree to provide advice to people seeking asylum and stated that the Council would continue to work compassionately.

Members were advised that the Council worked particularly closely with Harpurhey Library to deliver job search drop-in sessions because there was a large population of Afghan residents in this area but other libraries in the city offered similar support.

In response to a query regarding support provided to those arriving from countries not referenced in the report, the Strategic Lead (Homelessness) explained that the report focused on the work commissioned by the Home Office and the specific teams providing support. The Statutory Deputy Leader advised that the city's strategy for people seeking sanctuary and the related action plan applied to arrivals from across the world.

The Strategic Lead, RSMP advised that work was ongoing by the Home Office to provide a further 18 months permission for Ukrainian nationals to remain in the UK. She noted that further engagement was required with hosts to understand how to access additional support. The Strategic Lead (Homelessness) assured the committee that the service had capacity to support Ukrainian nationals and their hosts through this process and stated that the Council had helped a significant number of people from Ukraine to secure more permanent and stable accommodation.

The committee was also advised that the Local Authority of Sanctuary action plan would look at how volunteering opportunities could be improved across the city and how this could help those seeking sanctuary to gain employment.

In concluding this item, the Chair commended the Homelessness service for their work and compassion towards the most vulnerable people seeking sanctuary in Manchester.

Decision:

That the report be noted.

[Councillor Good declared a personal interest in this item]

CESC/25/4 Overview Report

The committee received a report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit which provided responses to previous recommendations, details of key decisions that fell within the Committee's remit and any items for information previously requested by the Committee.

Decision:

That the report be noted.

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2024

Present:

Councillor Muse – in the Chair
Councillors Amin, Collins, Fletcher, Foley, Gartside, Lovecy, Mandongwe, McHale, Nunney, Sadler and Sharif Mahamed

Co-opted Voting Members:

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

Also present:

Councillor Akbar, Executive Member for Finance and Resources
Councillor Reid, Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People

Apologies:

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

CYP/24/56 Appointment of a Chair for the Meeting

As Councillor Bell had sent her apologies for the meeting, the Committee Support Officer asked for nominations for a Member to chair the meeting. A Member nominated Councillor Muse, which was seconded by another Member and agreed by the Committee.

Decision

To appoint Councillor Muse as Chair for the meeting.

CYP/24/57 Interests

Councillor Mandongwe declared a personal interest as a trustee of the Dimobi Children's Disability Trust and stated that she would declare any conflicts of interests during the meeting and recuse herself from any related decisions.

CYP/24/58 Minutes

Decision

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

CYP/24/59 Revenue Budget Update

CYP/24/60 Children and Education Services Budget 2025/26

The Committee considered the report of the City Treasurer that provided a high-level overview of the latest budget position for the Council in respect of its 2025/26 budget.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources referred to the points and themes in the report which included:

- Noting that the Council was forecasting an estimated budget shortfall of £101m in 2025/26, £126m in 2026/27, and £164m by 2027/28;
- Mitigations approved in previous budget rounds included approved savings of £32m, the use of c£18m smoothing reserves in each of the three years, and a Council Tax increase of 4.99% (c£11m) a year. After these mitigations the gap reduced to £29m in 2025/26, £41m in 2026/27 and £77m by 2027/28;
- Noting that councils faced a funding gap of £6.2 billion over the next two years, and this needed to be considered in the context of an estimated £24.5 billion in cuts and efficiencies in service spending that councils had made since 2010/11;
- Noting that over the same period the Council had delivered over £440m of savings;
- The 2023/24 outturn position reported to Executive 5 June 2024, reported an overspend of £5.3m. The second monitoring report of 2024/25 was considered by Executive on 13 November, reporting a forecast overspend of £20m. The ongoing implications of this overspend must be considered as part of the budget setting process;
- Consideration of the Government's Autumn Statement, noting that a key headline for Local Government was that Core Spending Power would increase by 3.2% in real terms in 2025/26;
- Noting that Ministers had indicated additional funding would be targeted through a deprivation-based approach; and
- A summary of the budget position, noting that the final budget position for 2025/26 would be confirmed at February 2025 Executive. This would be after the Finance Settlement was received and key decisions confirming the Council Tax and Business Rates tax base to be used to determine the collection fund position had been made in January.

The Committee also considered the report of the Strategic Director (Children and Education Services) which provided officer-developed options to contribute to the balancing of the overall Council budget. Final options would be proposed following the announcement of the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, expected prior to Christmas. The Committee was invited to consider the current proposed changes which were within its remit and to make recommendations to the Executive. The Committee would have the opportunity to review proposals in the context of the financial settlement again in February and make final recommendations for the Executive to consider on 19th February 2025 when the final budget decisions would be made.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Service overview and priorities;

- Service budget and proposed changes;
- Commissioning and procurement priorities;
- Workforce implications; and
- Equality and anti-poverty impact.

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

- How the additional funding announced by the Government would be used;
- The impact of the new route plan software for Home-School Transport;
- The impact of early intervention and prevention initiatives in reducing demand;
- Thanking officers for their work;
- To welcome the actions outlined at 3.4 in the report, in particular in relation to fostering and the development of the new Greater Manchester shared children's residential care service, Project Skyline, noting the importance of being innovative;
- Sharing best practice with and supporting other local authorities;
- The use of interim and agency staff; and
- The Social Work apprenticeship scheme.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources reported that the announcements from the new Government were very welcome but there was still a lot of uncertainty, with neither the provisional Local Government settlement nor the formula for distribution of funds across local authority areas yet confirmed. He advised that every year the overspend was being covered from the General Reserve Fund but that this Fund needed to be replenished from the 2025/26 budget. He reported that, while this year was a one-year settlement from the Government, in future years, local authorities would receive multi-year settlements and this certainty would help the Council to plan early help work and to reduce demand. He highlighted that a lot of the proposals put forward related to income generation, efficiency savings and transformational work rather than cuts to services.

The Director of Education reported that the new planning software for Home-School Transport had already had a positive impact, with £1.1 million in savings from its first use. She advised that there had been a reduction in single occupancy vehicles and that it did result in some children's journeys being longer but that the transition to the new routes had been smooth and complaints about the service were rare now. In response to a question from the Chair, she advised that some elements of Home-School Transport were in-house, in particular the policy, the eligibility assessment, the management and the passenger assistants; however, she advised that the vehicles and drivers were commissioned, that there were no plans to bring these in-house and she did not believe that this element could be delivered more efficiently in-house.

The Acting Deputy Director of Children's Services outlined how the early intervention approach was preventing families from requiring Child in Need statutory services, while highlighting that in recent years families had been presenting with greater complexities. She advised that Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) demonstrated that the long-term investment into Early Help had impacted positively on demand and referrals into statutory services and the numbers of Looked After Children. She

informed Members about the support offered to foster carers, including the Mockingbird programme, which provided peer-to-peer support and tailored training and which was currently being expanded. She outlined the Trailblazer Projects that Manchester was involved in, advising that these presented opportunities to share best practice and advised that the Council also shared best practice through a range of other means, including the Early Help Community of Practice, Core Cities and the Local Government Association.

The Acting Strategic Director (Children and Education Services) reported that 86% of children with a Child In Need (CIN) plan who received Early Help did not then require another CIN plan over the following year. He also reported that the number of Looked After Children proportionate to the population was lower than in 2010, if Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children were excluded from the figures, and that Social Workers average caseloads had significantly reduced. He informed Members that the cost-of-living crisis had resulted in more families requiring support from Early Help, in particular short-term help in relation to financial issues and housing. He reported that in 2020, 13% of staff were agency workers but that this had now reduced to 8% and that staff turnover had also reduced significantly. In response to questions from the Chair, he provided further information on Project Skyline, a major capital investment, led by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), to create a new Greater Manchester shared children's residential care service, which would sit alongside the Council's own sufficiency projects. In response to a question from the Chair about including the voice of young people, he confirmed that young people had been engaged with in relation to this project and he offered to provide further information after the meeting. He reported that the numbers on the Social Work apprenticeship in Children's Services had been doubled from 6 to 12 and that this was a rolling programme. He advised that the Council would continue to invest in this programme and he was optimistic about Government support for extending this. The Acting Deputy Director of Children's Services provided information on a separate programme that the Council had been participating in for several years for people with degrees to move into Social Work via an intensive two-year programme. She reported that the Council had previously run a Step Up to Social Work scheme for existing Council staff.

The Assistant Finance Director (Children, Education and Schools) advised that spending on residential placements was £60 million in 2010/11 and this had remained the same up to 2022/23, which was a significant achievement, considering inflation over this period; however, she advised that costs had since increased due to significant increases in the cost of external placements.

The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People informed Members about the journey that Children's Services had been on since 2014, when it had been judged as inadequate by Ofsted. She reported that she would share a letter from Bridget Phillipson, the Secretary of State for Education, outlining the new Government's approach to children's social care, "Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive", advising that this included a cap on charges for external placements. She encouraged the Committee to undertake more visits to frontline social work teams across the city.

Decision

To note the reports and the proposed budget changes relevant to the remit of this Committee.

CYP/24/61 Progress update on the development of the Our Manchester Strategy 2025-2035

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Chief Executive which provided an update on the development of the new Our Manchester Strategy for the city covering the period 2025 to 2035. It built on a previous report to Scrutiny Committees in July 2024.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background, noting that The Our Manchester Strategy 2025 was the ten-year strategy for the city and was due to expire in 2025;
- Providing a summary of the second round of engagement activity;
- The findings that were most relevant to the remit of the Committee;
- An overview of the new strategy, noting that the OMS would focus on twelve priorities over the next ten years; and
- Following formal approval, the OMS 2025-2035 would be launched in April 2025.

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

- To welcome the ambition of the Strategy and the strong partnership work in the city, including with the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Sector;
- Concern that only 64.5% of respondents had agreed with the priority relating to climate change and that the Council needed to win over hearts and minds of residents and engage with partner organisations on this issue, noting that this was an important issue for many children and young people;
- Noting the consultation on the Climate Change Framework and that the 5-year plan for Greater Manchester was being reviewed, ensuring that these fed into the final document and that the importance of tackling climate change was emphasised;
- Positive comments about the engagement work that had taken place and thanking officers for their work;
- Engagement with children, including younger children, and young people, including university students;
- Highlighting and supporting the key priorities of the economy, equality and the environment;
- That reference should be made to providing pathways for 14 – 19 year-olds, especially those who were at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training);
- That the priority relating to sport and culture should place greater emphasis on opportunities for Manchester's children and young people to play sports and

participate in activities, rather than focusing on the two major football clubs, also noting that the cost of Premier League tickets was beyond the means of many local families but that this was not within the Council's control; and

- How it would be ensured that under-represented groups were meaningfully included in shaping key priorities.

The Assistant Chief Executive advised that the original wording of the priority relating to climate change ("Manchester will be protected from the harmful effects of climate change") might have resulted in some people disagreeing and that the wording had since been amended. He highlighted that only 13.5% of respondents had disagreed with the priority, with 22.1% neither agreeing nor disagreeing. He advised that climate change was a strong theme from the engagement with children and young people on the Strategy and from the engagement in relation to Child Friendly City, which officers had also taken into account in the development of the Strategy. He confirmed that the results of the engagement work could be broken down by different characteristics, including age, so the views of young people could be appropriately weighted. He also confirmed that engagement had taken place through the universities as part of phase 1. In response to a Member's comments about the reference to 'residents' median wages', he advised that the wording of this section had been amended and that, following a comment at the previous day's Economy and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee that earning levels should be referenced in the priority, further consideration would be given to the wording. He advised that the priority "Have world-renowned things for everyone to see and do, showcasing our talent for sport and culture" was intended to reflect both activities that people in the city could participate in and events that would attract people into the city but that officers would review the wording of this for the next version of the document to ensure that it struck the right balance. He advised that partners in the public, private and VCSE sector had been widely engaged with in the development of the Strategy, noting that this was a Strategy for the city, not just for the Council. He reported that there would be further engagement with partners over the next few months over how the Strategy would be embedded into organisations. In response to comments about engaging under-represented groups, he reported that feedback indicated that people wanted to be involved and included on an on-going basis and he drew Members' attention to the priorities that our people would "be proud of our diversity, feel valued, included and that they belong" and would "be supported to participate, engage and influence decisions about their communities and neighbourhoods." He advised that there was already good practice in the Council in relation to this, including Child Friendly City, Making Manchester Fairer and Community Health Equity and that there would be a focus on extending good practice and applying it consistently across the Council.

The Strategy and Economic Policy Manager advised that the development of the Strategy did not only take into account the responses to the consultation but also data from other work the Council had undertaken, such as Child Friendly City, and other evidence, for example, climate change targets were based on scientific information. He recognised the important role of partner organisations in facilitating the engagement work. He reported that there had been some engagement work at children's centres and primary schools and that parents with young children had also been engaged with in many other locations.

In response to questions from the Chair, the Assistant Chief Executive provided further information on the pop-up stalls, advising that the locations had been chosen to get coverage across different areas of the city. He acknowledged that the consultation in phase 2 had not been as wide-reaching as phase 1, due to time constraints, but advised that it should be considered alongside the much more extensive engagement at phase 1. He reported that earlier in the year officers from his service had met with Ward Councillors to ask for their suggestions for the best places within their ward to engage with residents, advising that the intention had been to engage with residents in locations where they would ordinarily be rather than asking them to attend a consultation event.

The Chair recommended increased community engagement to ensure under-represented groups were reached, that the Council benchmark against other cities and that measurable goals be set in order to evaluate progress, with periodic updates provided.

The Assistant Chief Executive reported that an implementation plan would be developed which would provide more specific information in relation to the twelve priorities. He advised that the State of the City Report would be revised to align with the new Strategy and that this annual report would provide a range of indicators and narrative on progress towards the twelve priorities within the Strategy. He informed the Committee that benchmarking with other cities was carried out as part of the State of the City work, as well as in relation to individual services. He advised that further work would be done to engage with communities which were under-represented, linking in with other areas of work such as Making Manchester Fairer.

Decision

To note the report, recognising the importance of community engagement, particularly with under-represented groups, benchmarking against other cities and monitoring progress against measurable goals and noting the assurances from the Assistant Chief Executive that these are being addressed.

CYP/24/62 Overview Report

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

A Member asked for an update on the Education Climate Change Action Plan to be added to the work programme. The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People suggested that this be raised with Councillor Bell on her return.

Decision

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

Health Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2024

Present:

Councillor Green – in the Chair

Councillors Cooley, Curley, Hilal, Johnson, Judge, Karney, Marsh, Muse and Sarwar

Apologies: Councillors Reeves and Riasat

Also present:

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

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

Councillor Akbar, Executive Member for Finance and Resources

Katy Calvin-Thomas, Chief Executive, Manchester Local Care Organisation

Mark Edwards, Director of Performance & Operations, Manchester Local Care Organisation

HSC/24/44

Urgent Business - Mental Health Section S75 Partnership Agreement

The Deputy Director of Adult Social Services addressed the Committee to inform Members that following a delivery model assessment a 'Decision in Principle' had been taken to return Adult Mental Health statutory functions and duties from Greater Manchester Mental Health Foundation Trust (GMMH) to the Adult Social Care Directorate working with the Manchester Local Care Organisation.

The Deputy Director of Adult Social Services said that the Directorate continued to work collaboratively with both GMMH and those staff concerned to ensure a safe transfer, and a report containing information on the new delivery model would be submitted for consideration to the 15 January 2025 meeting of the Committee.

The Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care made reference to the Manchester Evening News article, published 4 December 2024 that reported that the recent Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection rating of GMMH remained inadequate. He said that the decision in principle had been taken prior to the publication of the most recent CQC inspection report.

The Committee endorsed the proposals described by the Deputy Director of Adult Social Services.

Decision

To note the verbal update.

HSC/24/45

Minutes

Decision

To approve the minutes of the Health Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 6 November 2024 as a correct record.

HSC/24/46

Community Health Transformation Programme

The Committee considered the report of the Manchester Local Care Organisation (MLCO) that provided an update on the progress of the MLCO's Community Health Transformation Programme.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Noting that this was a multi-year programme focused on reducing variation in and between community health services in Manchester, ensuring equality and equity of access to services to effectively tackle health inequalities and ensure best use of resources directed to population need;
- The Programme further supported the delivery of the vision for the Manchester Local Care Organisation;
- Consideration of the delivery of the transformation priorities identified for 2023/24;
- Discussion of the opportunities to deliver change and enhance service delivery using digital technology;
- In-year reprioritisation, noting that in year budget pressures being experienced across Manchester Foundation Trust resulted in the MLCO recently reviewing its Value for Patients (VfP) Programme, noting that it set out how savings would be delivered in-year, and recurrently;
- Discussion of national and local strategies; and
- Summary.

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

- Recognising and welcoming the achievements and improvements described;
- Consideration needed to be given to the language used in reports to ensure that they were accessible to the lay reader;
- Any future update reports on this activity need to articulate the improved health outcomes for residents;
- What were the lessons learnt from the Manchester Royal Infirmary/Central Discharge Pilot; and
- What was the planned approach to delivering Palliative Care.

The Chief Executive, Manchester Local Care Organisation said that she noted and accepted the comments expressed in relation to the style of the report. She commented that a report could be submitted to the Committee at the appropriate time that fully described how the Adult Social Care, NHS and VCSE partners and systems were working together to achieve the best outcomes for residents. She commented that there was a significant amount of work ongoing on the issue of digital

connectivity, noting that this had been a significant technical challenge, however there existed good working arrangements between health and social care teams across the city. She said that in terms of lessons learnt, she commented that the MLCO continued to reflect and review all activities and referred to the Manchester Royal Infirmary/Central Discharge Pilot as a recent example of where the learning from this was now embedded in improved hospital services.

The Director of Performance & Operations, MLCO commented that the Manchester Royal Infirmary/Central Discharge Pilot was a good example of improved systems achieved by health and social care partners working collaboratively to achieve improved outcomes for residents. He acknowledged the Social Work team who had helped deliver this pilot. He commented that in respect to Palliative Care a report would be submitted to the 5 March 2025 meeting of the Committee that would provide further information on the work to deliver this service in community settings.

The Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care commented that the report submitted was a strategic level report. He commented that he was very proud of the work of the MLCO in bringing services together to achieve the best outcomes for Manchester residents. He further informed the Committee that Katy Calvin-Thomas, Chief Executive, MLCO would soon be leaving her position, and he wished to place on record his appreciation to her for her important contribution to the city.

Decision

To note the report.

HSC/24/47 Revenue Budget Update

The Committee considered the report of the City Treasurer that provided a high-level overview of the latest budget position for the Council in respect of its 2025/26 budget. Each scrutiny committee was invited to consider the officer-developed options which were within its remit and to make recommendations to the Executive before it agreed to the final budget proposals in February 2025.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources referred to the points and themes in the report that included:

- Noting that the Council was forecasting an estimated budget shortfall of £101m in 2025/26, £126m in 2026/27, and £164m by 2027/28;
- Mitigations approved in previous budget rounds included approved savings of £32m, the use of c£18m smoothing reserves in each of the three years, and a Council Tax increase of 4.99% (c£11m) a year. After these mitigations the gap reduced to £29m in 2025/26, £41m in 2026/27 and £77m by 2027/28;
- Noting that councils faced a funding gap of £6.2 billion over the next two years, and this needed to be considered in the context of an estimated £24.5 billion in cuts and efficiencies in service spending that councils had made since 2010/11;
- Noting that over the same period the Council had delivered over £440m of savings;

- The 2023/24 outturn position reported to Executive 5 June 2024, reported an overspend of £5.3m. The second monitoring report of 2024/25 was considered by Executive on 13 November, reporting a forecast overspend of £20m. The ongoing implications of this overspend must be considered as part of the budget setting process;
- Consideration of the Government's Autumn Statement, noting that a key headline for Local Government was that Core Spending Power would increase by 3.2% in real terms in 2025/26;
- Noting that Ministers had indicated additional funding would be targeted through a deprivation-based approach; and
- A summary of the budget position, noting that the final budget position for 2025/26 would be confirmed at February 2025 Executive. This would be after the Finance Settlement was received and key decisions confirming the Council Tax and Business Rates tax base to be used to determine the collection fund position had been made in January.

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

- The ongoing confidence in the Executive Member for Finance and Resources in delivering a balanced budget;
- Noting that any agreed budget proposals would be subject to Equalities Impact Assessments; and
- Noting the social determinants of health and that Manchester was committed to being a Marmot City the Chair welcomed any additional funding would be targeted through a deprivation-based approach.

Decision

To note the report.

HSC/24/48 Public Health Budget

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Public Health that provided an overview of the Public Health Directorate service and budget strategy and the officer work on developing further cashable savings options for 2025-28 to contribute to the balancing of the overall Council budget. Final options would be proposed following the announcement of the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, expected prior to Christmas.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Service overview and priorities, noting that Manchester's Public Health Department priorities focused on multiple areas to improve the overall health and wellbeing of its residents;
- Service budget and proposed budget changes;
- Commissioning and procurement priorities;
- Making Manchester Fairer, noting that the need to tackle inequalities in the city continued to be a corporate and political priority;

- Workforce implications;
- Equality and anti-poverty impact; and
- Officer-developed options for 2025-2028, noting that these had been developed so that the Directorate could meet its statutory duties and maximise benefits to Manchester's residents.

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

- Further information was sought in relation to the additional funding for drug and alcohol treatment and smoking services and support allocated to Manchester by the Department of Office of Health and Disparities (OHID); and
- How were outcomes and improvements measured in absolute numbers.

The Director of Public Health said that the additional funding for drug and alcohol treatment and smoking services and support had enabled CGL (Change Grow Live), the commissioned provider to increase their capacity to increase outreach and support services, adding that they had been able to mobilise quickly in response to this grant funding. She commented that this service was a "gold standard" specialist stop smoking service.

The Director of Public Health said in relation to the question regarding performance data and outcomes that the budget report that would be submitted to the 12 February 2025 meeting would contain further details. The Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care directed the Member to the report that had been considered at the 4 September 2024 meeting that discussed Long Term Conditions and described the work underway in Manchester to improve health outcomes and address health inequalities in the prevalence and management of long-term health conditions through the work of the Population Health Management Board and the Long-Term Conditions programme overseen by the Manchester Provider Collaborative.

The Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care paid tribute to the Director of Public Health, noting the significant challenges presented in delivering a balanced budget due to the complex joint funding and grant arrangements that existed.

Decision

To note the report.

HSC/24/49 Adult Social Care Budget

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director of Adult Social Services that provided an overview of the Adult Social Care Directorate service and budget strategy and the officer work on developing further cashable savings options for 2025-28 to contribute to the balancing of the overall Council budget. Final options would be proposed following the announcement of the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, expected prior to Christmas.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- An overview of services and priorities;
- Providing a description of the 'Achieving Better Outcomes Together' strategy;
- An overview of the budget strategy, noting that the 'Achieving Better Outcomes Together' strategy would move us from Strengths-Based practice into a Strengths-Based System;
- Service budget and proposed changes;
- Details of the savings plan 2025-28;
- Discussion of growth and pressures in 2025-28;
- Information on Government Grants and other income in 2025-28;
- The implications of the Care Uplift 2025/26 and Market Sustainability Improvement Fund;
- Charges and income;
- Establishment and investment;
- Strategic commissioning and procurement priorities;
- Workforce implications;
- Consideration of the Equality and Anti-Poverty impact; and
- Future opportunities, risks and policy/strategy considerations.

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

- Noting that the report was very clearly written and presented; and
- More information was sought in relation to analysis currently underway to understand the financial implications of the Care Uplift.

The Deputy Director of Adult Social Services stated that the consultation on the Care Uplift was ongoing, adding that Manchester was committed to paying the real living wage. She said that work continued with the City Treasurer and colleagues in the finance team to understand and model the implications of the National Insurance contributions changes. She commented that the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, expected prior to Christmas would further inform this work and further detail would be provided in the budget reports scheduled for consideration at the 12 February 2025 meeting.

The Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care stated that the spending of every Manchester pound was taken very seriously, and he referred to report that described that the Achieving Better Outcomes Together strategy included a strong focus on demand management and cost avoidance as well as delivering core practice responsibilities to support Manchester residents. He said that he attended regular meetings to review and monitor this activity. He also referred to the section of the report that described that the number of home care packages were increasing whilst residential care was reducing, thus helping people to remain living safely in their homes and neighbourhoods where appropriate to do so.

Decision

To note the report.

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Chief Executive that provided an update on the development of the new Our Manchester Strategy (OMS) for the city covering the period 2025 to 2035. It built on a previous report to Scrutiny Committees in July 2024.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background, noting that the OMS 2025 was the ten-year strategy for the city and was due to expire in 2025;
- Providing a summary of the second round of engagement activity;
- The findings that were most relevant to the remit of the Committee;
- An overview of the new strategy, noting that the OMS would focus on twelve priorities over the next ten years; and
- Following formal approval, the OMS 2025-20235 would be launched in April 2025.

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

- Noting the relatively low figures presented in relation to the question asked about the priority about climate change;
- Was there an opportunity to provide free text when people were responding to the questionnaire and was this recorded;
- Noting the analysis of the responses provided at section 8.2 of the report, was granular; and
- 'Priority 1: Our people will be supported to be happy, healthy and active from childhood to adulthood' needed to include specific reference to Manchester being an ACE-aware and trauma informed city.

The Assistant Chief Executive stated that the Council had a distinct and unique civic leadership role on the issue of climate change. He said that the Council had made significant progress in reducing its own carbon emissions and that the new Manchester City Council Climate Change Action Plan for 2025-30, that was currently being developed would include specific consideration of communications and resident engagement. He said that appropriate consideration had been given to the wording and framing of the consultation questions, particularly in relation to the issue of climate change. He further commented that the OMS Strategy was a high level strategy that articulated the priorities and ambitions for the city, and this would inform specific Council strategies. He said that an implementation plan would also be devised to accompany the OMS. He further advised that free text had been captured and incorporated into the analysis.

Decision

The Committee recommend that 'Priority 1: Our people will be supported to be happy, healthy and active from childhood to adulthood' needed to include specific reference to Manchester's ambition to be an ACE-aware, trauma informed and trauma responsive city.

HSC/24/51

Overview Report

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

Decision

The Committee notes the report and agrees the work programme.

Health Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2025

Present:

Councillor Green – in the Chair

Councillors Cooley, Curley, Hilal, Judge, Karney, Marsh, Muse, Reeves and Sarwar

Apologies: Councillors Johnson and Riasat

Also present:

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

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

Councillor White, Executive Member for Housing and Development

HSC/25/01 Minutes

Decision

To approve the minutes of the Health Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 4 December 2024 as a correct record.

HSC/25/02 Integrated Care Systems

The Committee considered the report of the Place Based Lead, Manchester Integrated Care Partnership that provided an update on Manchester's connections with NHS Greater Manchester (NHS GM) in relation to governance, partnerships, financial arrangements and future plans within the Manchester Locality.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background, including the historical context which led to the establishment of NHS GM;
- Describing the current governance arrangements;
- GM and locality responsibilities;
- A high-level summary of the financial relationship between the City Council and NHS GM;
- Information on the NHS GM Sustainability Plan; and
- A summary of Manchester Partnership Board's priorities to improve health and care outcomes for our residents through a refreshed version of the 'Our Healthier Manchester' strategy.

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

- Noting the stark figures presented within the report regarding the projected figures for people diagnosed with a major illness and that people were living longer and spending more years in ill health;
- Noting that GM has some of the lowest life expectancy rates in England;

- Stating that this data should be used to articulate and evidence the case for additional funding to be allocated locally to support health and prevention services;
- Noting that despite the above comments NHS bodies were being asked to make efficiency savings each year;
- Welcoming the additional £22.6 billion allocated to the NHS over the next two years in the October 2024 Budget;
- Noting that Lord Darzi's report had identified deterioration in population health nationally as a key driver for the pressures faced by the health and care system, and therefore major, coordinated public health campaigns around a range on issues such as healthy eating, alcohol related harm and smoking should be launched at scale; and
- Enquiring if there was any further update on the delivery of the new hospital in North Manchester.

The Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care stated that he had continuing reservations regarding the approach taken by NHS Greater Manchester in regard to funding decisions for the Manchester Integrated Care System and the subsequent monitoring of those decisions. He stated that with the endorsement of the Committee he would write a joint letter with the Chair to the Chair of NHS Greater Manchester to articulate those concerns. The Committee endorsed this recommendation. The Chair commented that she would meet with the Executive Member to discuss this further outside of the meeting.

The Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care stated that the Health and Wellbeing Board received reports on public health campaigns and the approach to these. He commented that a report on this activity could be provided to the Committee at the appropriate time.

The Place-based Lead, NHS GM (Manchester) stated that a further announcement on the New Hospital Programme was imminent, however at the time of reporting there was no further information available. In response to a specific question, he stated that Integrated Neighbourhood Teams, that brought together health and social care services had been established in Manchester since 2017. He said this model of integration also included prevention services and he made further reference to the 'Greater Manchester Live Well' programme, a delivery model for community-led health and wellbeing. The Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care further directed the Member to the recent update report that had been considered by the Committee that described the work of the Manchester Local Care Organisation.

The Place-based Lead, NHS GM (Manchester) acknowledged the comments raised in regard to funding arrangements and the savings required. He said this was not unique to Manchester and was a national challenge. He said that the approach to delivering those savings would be to minimise the impact on residents and referred the Committee to the section of the report headed 'Manchester Financial Picture' that described the approach to be taken to achieve the required savings.

The Chair commented that Manchester had taken the lead nationally in regard to integration of health and social care, however the statistics reported in relation to

health outcomes remained stark and she supported the continued call for additional, appropriate levels of funding.

Decisions

The Committee recommends,

1. That the Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care and the Chair write a joint letter to the Chair of NHS Greater Manchester to articulate concerns regarding funding decisions.
2. To receive a report that describes the approach to public health campaigns.

HSC/25/03 Mental Health Section S75 Partnership Agreement - New Delivery Model

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director of Adult Social Services that provided an update on the intention to move forward with the 'Decision in Principle' to fully transfer mental health statutory social work functions and duties from Greater Manchester Mental Health Foundation Trust (GMMH) back to the Adult Social Care Directorate.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- The "Decision in Principle" would ensure that the Adult Social Care (ASC) Directorate had clearer governance, oversight and accountability of the social work function (and associated delivery model) to ensure it could more effectively address the various statutory duties under the Care Act 2014, and Mental Health Act (1983), amended (2007);
- Describing that this way of working would support our ambitions regarding Making Manchester Fairer;
- Describing the Programme Vision and Workstream Objectives, noting that the programme contained 6 key workstreams and the programme was estimated to take 24 months;
- Describing that the new pathway sought to retain and strengthen current best practice in multidisciplinary teams and partnership working with GMMH and would provide a central focus to a renewed social care pathway across Community Mental Health Teams;
- Noting that the new mental health pathway would be robustly underpinned by the principles and approach established within the Department of Health Strategic Statement - Social Work for Better Mental Health;
- Describing the approach to Social Work for Better Mental Health, noting that this statement and its key messages would be at the heart of the forthcoming transformation journey to raise the professional identity, agency and utility of mental health social work;
- Describing how the proposals described would improve outcomes for staff;
- Describing how the proposals described would improve outcomes for people;
- Discussion of the identified risk and how this would be managed; and
- Noting that the report signalled the start of a new journey to positively refresh and reset ways of working within a mental health social work pathway.

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

- Fully endorsing the decision and the direction of travel described within the report;
- Noting the history of delivery of mental health services in Manchester, governance, oversight and accountability were important to the successful delivery of these services in the future;
- How had staff at GMMH responded to the decision; and
- How would success of this new approach be assessed and reported.

The Executive Director of Adult Social Services stated that the decision taken had been fully supported by the Chief Executive at GMMH, adding that this approach was being adopted across all Greater Manchester authorities to ensure a consistent approach. The Head of Commissioning, Adult Social Care Mental Health added that the need to engage and support those staff affected was fully recognised and a programme of engagement events in appropriate forums was being delivered. He further commented that it was the intention of the programme to engage with people with lived experience in regard to these changes

The Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care stated that full engagement and consultation with Trade Unions had been undertaken and that informal feedback from staff that he had received directly had been fully supportive of the approach described within the report. He stated that the importance and value of staff was fully acknowledged, and he remained committed to supporting staff through this transition.

The Executive Director of Adult Social Services acknowledged the comment made regarding the importance of governance, oversight and accountability and said that the programme was estimated to take 24 months. This included a minimum period of 12 months for analysis, planning and phased repatriation of the functions, scheduled during the first year. This would be followed by a further 12 months of stabilisation. She said this would be done collaboratively with GMMH to ensure a safe transition.

The Executive Director of Adult Social Services stated that a Performance Framework would be agreed that would report metrics across a range of relevant activities and this would enable ongoing monitoring and reporting.

The Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care responded to a specific question regarding the different models of care by stating that this was a strategic level report and the Committee would continue to receive reports on the delivery of mental health services in the regular report submitted to the Committee.

Decision

To note the report.

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director of Adult Social Services that provided an update on the latest developments around Extra Care Housing (ECH).

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- An update on the current provision, noting that there were currently 12 ECH schemes in the city, providing 762 extra care apartments, dispersed geographically among Manchester's neighbourhoods and corresponding to higher population levels of older people;
- Proposals for future developments, noting that a further four ECH schemes were in the commissioning 'pipeline';
- An update on Neighbourhood apartment developments;
- Providing a cost benefit analysis of this model;
- Findings of an independent Extra Care Housing evaluation exercise undertaken by Healthwatch Manchester;
- Resident feedback; and
- Information on Manchester's Enabling Independence Accommodation Strategy (EIAS), noting that a full update report on the EIAS would be submitted to Health Scrutiny at the appropriate time.

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

- Welcoming the report and requesting that when any future update report was submitted residents of ECH should be invited to the meetings to describe and share their experience of living in ECH;
- Acknowledging the demand and need for ECH would increase across the city;
- ECH was a much better environment for many residents to live with more independence as opposed to care homes or hospital settings;
- Noting that the report presented a significant achievement for the city;
- Noting that this had been achieved through positive collaboration and joint working between the Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care and the Executive Member for Housing and Development;
- What were the design features of the Dementia specialist Extra Care scheme in Blackley;
- Noting that the prevalence of dementia among the 65+ population (4.87%) in Manchester was higher than both the Greater Manchester average (4.11%) and the English average prevalence (3.97%); and
- What provision was there for younger people who would benefit from ECH, such as learning disabled citizens and Korsakoff's syndrome (an Alcohol related 'dementia').

The Head of Commissioning for Older People, Prevention and VCFSE advised that issue of dementia was fully understood. In response to the issue of the prevalence of dementia he said this was due to a number of factors such as age, ethnicity, smoking and alcohol consumption.

The Deputy Director of Adult Social Services stated that a comprehensive report on the issue of dementia would be submitted to the Committee at the appropriate time. She said that ECH schemes for dementia were purposely designed to be 'dementia friendly' with individually tailored support to assist residents to engage in activities that would help maintain their independence within the supportive environment. She commented that the need for supported housing for working age adults with different needs was understood and further information on the delivery of the wider Enabling Independence Accommodation Strategy would be included in a future update report to the Committee.

Decision

To note the report.

HSC/25/05 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.

Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 5 December 2024

Present:

Councillor Simcock (Chair) – in the Chair

Councillors Connolly, Glover, Kilpatrick, Kirkpatrick, Noor, Rasul, Stogia and Wheeler

Also present:

Councillor Bridges, Deputy Leader

Councillor Akbar, Executive Member for Finance and Resources

Councillor White, Executive Member for Housing and Development

Apologies: Councillor Evans

Chair's Announcements

In opening the meeting, the Chair noted that Councillor Davies had stepped down from the committee due to other commitments and thanked her for her 10 years' service to the committee. He also thanked officers for reports being available on time upon publication.

RGSC/24/86 Minutes

A committee member queried the accuracy of a point raised at the previous meeting that 40% of Manchester's population were from the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) community. In response, the Executive Member for Finance and Resources confirmed that this was correct as per the 2021 Census.

Decision:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 7 November 2024 be approved as a correct record.

RGSC/24/87 Update on the insourcing of the contract for provision of property management and professional services from Jacobs UK

The committee considered a report of the Director of Development which provided a summary of the progress made to insource the property management and professional services contract from Jacobs UK, which culminated in the transfer of 16.5 FTE employees to the Council in May 2024.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- The Jacobs UK team consist of Chartered Valuation, Commercial Property and Land Surveyors, Project Managers and Technical Assistants;
- Insourcing first was now a Council corporate priority following a motion approved at Full Council in February 2023;

- The Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of employment) (TUPE) process followed, which went smoothly as a result of collaboration between the Development, HR, Finance and IT services;
- Examples of recent service delivery; and
- Stabilisation and performance management.

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

- Commending the commitment to insourcing and the transfer of staff from Jacobs;
- The experiences of employees who initially worked for the Council before being transferred to Jacobs and back to the Council;
- The pension terms for those transferred to the Council;
- How performance of the service would be scrutinised;
- The rationale behind insourcing the property management service;
- Whether c£350k revenue through other income and recharges for services was a recurring figure;
- The volume of additional outsourced property services;
- What steps were being taken to ensure greater value-for-money within the service;
- What measures were being taken to improve debt collection; and
- If any specific measures were in place to ensure that the property portfolio contributed to the Council's zero carbon and energy efficiency targets.

The Deputy Leader highlighted the motion to make insourcing a corporate procurement priority passed by Council in 2023 and stated that the decision to bring the property management service previously contracted to Jacobs in-house demonstrated the Council's commitment to this. He stated that this decision was guided by political will and benefits for residents and explained that key performance indicators and internal governance processes were being developed to monitor the progress of this service.

The Director of Development explained that outsourcing services was common amongst local authorities during the period of austerity. He stated that significant time had passed since the decision to outsource the property management service and additional pressures and the need to deliver social value meant that integration with the Council was key.

A trainee surveyor who had been previously employed by Jacobs attended the meeting to share her experiences of transferring into the Council. She commended the development opportunities available at the Council and the commitment to personal and professional growth. She also highlighted the efforts made by management to integrate the transferred employees into the wider service and stated that the transition had been smooth.

In response to a member's query regarding the experiences of employees who worked for the Council before being transferred to Jacobs, the Assistant Director of Development and Investment Estate stated that he had met with members of the

team and, whilst there was an initial nervousness, feedback from staff had been largely positive. He stated that there was a mixture of new talent and experienced employees and that the service had inherited a balanced team. He highlighted the benefits of skill-swapping and understanding how to improve a place-based approach to the investment estate.

The Director of Development explained that some employees who were transferred to Jacobs as part of the outsourced remained employed on the Council's terms and conditions of employment and continued to be part of the Local Government Pension Scheme. He stated that the Jacobs pension scheme ended through the transfer of staff back to the Council and that all employees were now part of the Local Government Pension Scheme. He agreed to provide further detail on this following the meeting.

The committee was advised that a significant amount of time had passed since the property management service was first outsourced and the decision to bring this back within the Council would help with the need to ensure awareness of liability, providing greater customer service and to ensure an integrated approach to social value.

The Director of Development explained that there was a requirement as part of best practice to retain a subject multi-agency risk assessment conference (Marac) experts contracted for benchmarking and peer review exercises, meaning that there would continue to be fees for external valuations of properties. He stated that the Council had been increasingly outsourcing additional services to the Jacobs contract and that insourcing would allow for greater use of the existing skillsets of the team. He also highlighted examples of how the team's existing expertise had been utilised, which were listed in the report.

The committee was informed that any need for additional outsourced property services arose from audits and specialist advice. It was also highlighted that the service had a Professional Services Framework which set rates in line with market averages for external services.

The Director of Development advised that a working group with colleagues from Finance and Legal had been established to review large debt arrears. He stated that this was a complex area, but significant progress was anticipated within the coming financial years.

In response to queries regarding decarbonisation and energy efficiency, the Director of Development highlighted the importance of the Estates Strategy in delivering the Council's zero carbon targets and recognised progress with decarbonisation of the corporate estate. He noted that much of the investment estate was contracted out to tenants but the changing regulatory environment with regards to energy performance requirements for future lettings meant that some tenants were willing to pay more for high-quality properties that helped to meet their own corporate ambitions around zero carbon and energy efficiency. The Assistant Director of Development and Investment Estate advised that he was undertaking a baseline review of the investment estate to understand requirements around decarbonisation and energy performance works.

In concluding this item, the Chair thanked officers and wished the Trainee Surveyor luck with her career at the Council.

Decision:

That the report be noted.

RGSC/24/88 Progress update on the development of the Our Manchester Strategy 2025-2035

The committee considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive which provided an update on the development of the new Our Manchester Strategy for the city covering the period 2025 to 2035, building on a previous report to the committee in July 2024.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Phase 1 of public engagement, which took place across Manchester between February and May 2024;
- Phase 2 of public engagement, which took place between September and October 2024 and tested 12 draft priorities structured under the themes of People, Neighbourhoods and City;
- Where engagement sessions took place and partnership boards and stakeholder groups who were consulted;
- 2706 responses were received in the second phase of engagement and between 75% and 85% of respondents agreed with 11 of the 12 priority statements;
- Demographics of phase 2 respondents;
- Key considerations for the Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee;
- An overview of the new Strategy; and
- Next steps, including approval by Council in March 2025.

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

- Whether there was a consistent amount of in-person engagement sessions in each ward;
- How progress with digital exclusion could be assessed and monitored;
- Noting that the engagement indicated that zero carbon was the least prioritised area and that the wording for this priority had been revised;
- Noting that the draft Strategy stated that there were fewer people with no qualifications in Manchester than in previous years, and querying if this was because of greater attainment or age;
- Wage increase statistics in the draft Strategy did not account for inflation;
- How business owners were engaged on this work;
- The rationale and methodology behind the approach to the consultation and priorities and why this was not weighted;
- What the Council was doing to increase public buy-in to zero carbon targets;
- The need to increase understanding of the Strategy and its aims, particularly amongst specific communities;

- If any comparisons had been undertaken with similar strategies in other cities;
- How progress would be measured; and
- What was meant by social media survey comments and feedback.

The Assistant Chief Executive introduced the report and explained that phase 1 of public engagement had been carried out earlier this year and that phase 2 included drafting twelve priority statements based on the feedback from phase 1. He explained that these priorities had been drafted in plain English and tested through public engagement both in-person and online. He stated that a small percentage of respondents disagreed with the priority statements and officers had reflected on this and redrafted the priorities accordingly.

In response to queries regarding the phase 2 engagement, the Assistant Chief Executive explained that in-person sessions had been held across the city and in some particular venues which were close to the boundary of more than one ward. He stated that businesses had been consulted significantly during phase 1, which included engagement with groups, boards and forums. The Economic Strategy and Policy Manager reiterated that business networks had been engaged through phase 2 and that information on the consultation was shared in newsletters and other bulletins for businesses.

Members advised that a report on the Council's Digital Strategy, which worked to tackle digital exclusion, would be brought to the committee in January 2025.

It was also explained that social media survey comments and feedback related to any comments made on posts regarding the Strategy on the Council's social media channels.

With regard to the priority around climate change and zero carbon, the Assistant Chief Executive explained that this had been redrafted following public feedback because the original wording described factors that were outside of the Council's control. He stated that the revised priority highlighted areas within the Council's remit that it could also influence partners on. He acknowledged that climate change would not be a priority for some and that there would always be some people who disagreed with the principle of this. Members were advised that the feedback from the engagement regarding climate change and zero carbon would feed into the Council's Climate Change Action Plan and framework going forward.

The Assistant Chief Executive explained that 23% of Manchester residents did not have any qualifications in 2004, compared to 10% currently, but he endeavoured to identify a better way to express this in the Strategy. He also agreed to reflect on the language used to highlight wage increase since 2015, following a member's suggestion, but recognised that the local economy had performed well in recent years and that the Strategy aimed to convey that residents had benefitted from economic growth.

In response to a query regarding why priorities were not ranked, the Assistant Chief Executive explained that the aim of the consultation was to convey future ambitions for the Strategy so language around the priorities was purposely drafted positively. He stated that respondents were asked about challenges and issues in other ways

and that the public engagement had been carried out through a combination of the Council's in-house performance, research and intelligence team and external resources. He explained that data had been broken down by characteristics where respondents provided this information, and officers had been able to identify the different priorities between groups. The Economic Strategy and Policy Manager cited young people responding strongly to the priority around safety and security as an example of this.

The Assistant Chief Executive acknowledged the underrepresentation of young people, African and Muslim residents in the feedback and explained that targeted engagement had been undertaken to increase responses from these groups, such as attending youth groups and education settings. Similar face-to-face engagement had been undertaken in football hotspots and places of worship and community groups had engaged with residents on the Council's behalf. He also informed members that some activities to launch the Strategy would be held within communities, with a focus on underrepresented groups. The Economic Strategy and Policy Manager also explained that feedback had been captured through conversations between residents and staff at engagement sessions. He highlighted the significant work undertaken to engage children as part of the Council's Child Friendly City and Age Friendly Manchester work and this had been used as part of the evidence base to inform the Strategy.

In response to a member's query, officers explained that they had looked at similar strategies in other cities, but it was important for this strategy to be relevant to Manchester.

The committee was informed that an implementation plan would be developed to outline how the Strategy was delivered. The annual State of the City report would be reframed around the new Strategy and would highlight progress through an interactive dashboard that sat under the report.

The Deputy Chief Executive stated that the Strategy aimed to convey the views of residents so that they were included in its development and to maintain the aspiration for Manchester to be a top-class city. He highlighted that 11,000 children and young people had been engaged through the Child Friendly City work and the Council would continue to routinely engage with schools. He stated that a refresh of the Residents' Survey was underway, and this could be incorporated into future work.

Decision:

That the committee note the report.

RGSC/24/89 Budget 2025/26

The committee considered the report of the City Treasurer that provided a high-level overview of the latest budget position for the Council in respect of its 2025/26 budget. The committee also considered a report of the City Treasurer which presented the current officer-developed budget savings options which are within its remit.

Key points and themes in the reports included:

- Noting that the Council was forecasting an estimated budget shortfall of £101m in 2025/26, £126m in 2026/27, and £164m by 2027/28;
- Mitigations approved in previous budget rounds included approved savings of £32m, the use of c£18m smoothing reserves in each of the three years, and a Council Tax increase of 4.99% (c£11m) a year. After these mitigations the gap reduced to £29m in 2025/26, £41m in 2026/27 and £77m by 2027/28;
- Noting that councils faced a national funding gap of £6.2 billion over the next two years, and this needed to be considered in the context of an estimated £24.5 billion in cuts and efficiencies in service spending that councils had made since 2010/11;
- Noting that over the same period the Council had delivered over £440m of cumulative savings;
- The 2023/24 outturn position reported to Executive 5 June 2024, reported an overspend of £5.3m. The second monitoring report of 2024/25 was considered by Executive on 13 November, reporting a forecast overspend of £20m. The ongoing implications of this overspend must be considered as part of the budget setting process;
- Consideration of the Government's Autumn Statement, noting that a key headline for Local Government is that Core Spending Power would increase by 3.2% in real terms in 2025/26;
- Noting that Ministers had indicated additional funding would be targeted through a deprivation-based approach;
- A summary of the budget position, noting that the final budget position for 2025/26 would be confirmed at February 2025 Executive. This would be after the Finance Settlement was received and key decisions confirming the Council Tax and Business Rates tax base to be used to determine the collection fund position have been made in January.
- The gross 2024/25 budget for the Corporate Core service was £356.6m and the net budget was £114.4m with 2,104 FTE employees;
- The key priorities and initiatives for the service in 2025/26;
- The Corporate Core service was currently forecasting an underspend of £0.653m as at the end of September;
- New savings proposals for 2025/26 to 2027/28, totalling £9.812m, and cross-cutting savings proposals;
- Government grants and other income;
- Workforce implications; and
- Future opportunities, risks and policy and strategy considerations.

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

- Acknowledging the impact of cumulative budget cuts by previous governments;
- If trade unions had been consulted on the proposals;
- If there was capacity amongst staff to deal with natural turnover;
- Noting that council tax collection rates were lower than before the Covid-19 pandemic and the Council being an early adopter of the functionality to access

bank accounts of those in arrears to make financial assessments on abilities to pay;

- Seeking reassurance that staff vacancies were not being used as a buffer to enable savings;
- What engagement had been undertaken with security staff on the proposal to reduce opening hours of some entrances to the Town Hall Extension;
- Whether homelessness grant funding would make a difference to the cost of prevention measures and temporary accommodation; and
- How changing the payroll date would result in savings.

In introducing the report, the Executive Member for Finance and Resources highlighted the significant impact of cuts to local government funding imposed by previous governments. He stated that, whilst the measures announced in the Labour government's Autumn Budget had increased the core spending power for councils, the challenges in demand-led services would not be reduced within one budget or the first year of the new government's administration. He explained that officers had worked to identify savings proposals since early 2024 due to political and financial uncertainties and were working to mitigate the forecasted £20m overspend for 2024/25. He explained that many of the proposals related to savings, income generation and efficiencies and that these needed to be seriously considered to ensure the Council could set a balanced budget. He also welcomed the government's commitment to providing multi-year settlements from 2026, which would include a targeted approach and consideration of deprivation and need.

The Deputy Chief Executive reiterated the Executive Member's comments that the budget proposals had been approached through efficiencies and transformation and emphasised that compulsory staff redundancies were not currently being considered.

In response to queries, the Executive Member for Finance and Resources stated that any measures or proposals regarding the workforce would be subject to consultation with trade unions through the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC). The Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that an extraordinary meeting of the JCC would be scheduled.

The Deputy Chief Executive highlighted the digital transformation work of the Council which helped to improve efficiency, and this had been built into previous years' savings.

In response to a query regarding council tax collection, the Directorate Head of Finance stated that a number of initiatives were in place to improve this, such as through increased use of technology and analysis of single person discount to ensure eligibility. The Deputy Chief Executive clarified the pilot approach that the council was part of with a small number of other councils and HMRC regarding people with council tax arrears who had moved away from the area.

The City Treasurer explained that there was typically an underspend of between £8-£10m on staffing each year and that recruitment challenges in some areas meant that services had to adapt to working differently. He emphasised that the Council was not proposing staff redundancies but there had been a number of vacancies for over 12 months, so it was felt appropriate to review. He also stated that any direct impact

of vacancies on staff would be minimised, and that new technology was helping the Council to work in different ways and to reduce the need to recruit to some vacant posts.

With regard to the proposal to reduce the opening hours of some of the entrances to the Town Hall Extension, the Directorate Head of Finance explained that four entrances were currently open throughout the day and staffed by contracted security officers. He explained that it was proposed to reduce the opening hours of three of the entrances through later opening and earlier closure but the opening hours of at least one entrance would remain as is. A security presence would be maintained whilst entrances were open and the CCTV control room would continue to operate.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources emphasised the requirement for the Council to set a balanced budget. He explained that figures within the report highlighted the current budget gap and savings, should the current proposals be approved. He stated that the Local Government Finance Settlement had not yet been received and was difficult to predict due to the government's review of the funding formula. He assured members that the Council would be in a more informed position following receipt of the Settlement.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources also explained that significant work had been undertaken to reduce the number of homeless families in bed and breakfast and temporary accommodation. He stated that multi-year finance settlements would help to provide greater certainty for demand-led services, such as Homelessness.

The City Treasurer informed members that the current payroll process involved paying staff two weeks in advance and two weeks in arrears every month. He stated that this was a difficult process and that changing the payroll date to the end of the month would improve the Council's cashflow. Members were assured that adjustments would be made to help staff and that there was a 12-month lead-in time for this change.

Decision:

To note the reports.

RGSC/24/90 Housing Revenue Account 2025/26 to 2027/28

The committee considered a report of the Strategic Director (Growth and Development), the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) and the City Treasurer which provided initial details on the proposed Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget for 2025/26, and an indication of the 2026/27 and 2027/28 budgets. It also set out the key assumptions being used in developing the next year's budget and the outlook for the 30-year HRA business plan in light of the budget proposals.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- The proposed Council rent increase was 2.7% for 2025/26;

- The current budget position for the HRA as at period 6, with a forecasted overspend of £4.675m;
- The current budget assumptions for 2025/26, including proposed rent increases;
- Private Finance Initiative (PFI) managed rents were higher than general needs as they had not been subject to either the four years rent reductions, or the rent capping imposed on general needs rents;
- It was expected that Right to Buy sales would reduce following policy changes announced in the Autumn Statement, although there had been an initial spike in applications;
- Other income and PFI schemes;
- Management of housing stock and property numbers;
- Work of the Housing Services team;
- Debt financing and borrowing costs;
- Garage rents, which were proposed to increase by 5% in 2025/26; and
- Reserves forecast.

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

- If any consideration had been given to the impact of closing the Monsall Street offices on staff and residents;
- Outsourced contractors would be required to pay workers the uplift in National Insurance compared whereas this did not apply to insourced workers;
- Return visits to properties and whether additional staff were being trained to be able to fix ground source heat pumps; and
- Some of the key changes being made to increase productivity of operatives should already be in operation.

The Executive Member for Housing and Development introduced the report and stated that the Rent Settlement Agreement had been received which confirmed a rent increase of Consumer Price Inflation plus 1%, totalling an increase of 2.7%. He stated that the report highlighted some pressures and opportunities to invest in the housing stock across the north and city centre of Manchester. He acknowledged that challenges with the cost-of-living remained and stated that the Council had established the Community Living Fund, which was included in the budget for 2025/26.

The City Treasurer explained that the Treasury would compensate public sector-direct employees for the uplift in National Insurance contributions and that there was no current indication that this would apply to the supply chain. He stated that the final outcome on this was expected as part of the Local Government Finance Settlement and expressed concern over the sustainability of this uplift on the social care sector in particular.

The Assistant Director of Housing explained that the Monsall Street office had been closed to the public since 2020 and officers had not worked there for the last six months due to ongoing repairs work. He stated that discussions had been held with

local members on the impact of this closure and how residents could access services alternatively.

In response to a query regarding maintenance, particularly of ground source heat pumps, the Executive Member for Housing and Development acknowledged the importance of ensuring that data was correct, that the appropriate maintenance operatives were sent to jobs and that repairs were completed first-time. He recognised the need for the right skill force, deployment and client management and stated that work was ongoing to review the service with the potential to bring this in-house.

It was also highlighted that the Community Living Fund could help residents with broken heating or hot water.

The Executive Member for Housing and Development concurred with the Chair's comment that some of the activity proposed to increase productivity of operatives should already be in operation and that this work would transform the current service.

Decision:

That the report be noted.

[Councillor Connolly declared a pecuniary interest in this item and left the meeting for the duration of discussion]

[Councillor Wheeler declared a personal interest in this item]

RGSC/24/91 Setting of the Council Tax Base and Business Rates Shares for 2025/26 Budget Setting Purposes

The committee considered a report of the City Treasurer which provided background on the methodology used for calculating the City Council's council tax base and business rates income for budget setting purposes for 2025/26, along with the timings of related preceptor payments and the decision on business rates pool membership.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- The statutory dates by which the Council is required to notify its precepting authorities on the council tax and business rates decisions as part of the budget setting process;
- The most up to date information as at the end of December 2024 had to be used to calculate the Council's estimated Collection Fund surplus or deficit and so, in line with previous years, the Chair of Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee was requested to exempt the decision from call in. The City Treasurer, in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance and Resources, has delegated power to agree the estimated council tax surplus or deficit;

- The basis of the calculation of the council tax base, which was the number of dwellings within the Council's boundary presented as Band D equivalents adjusted to take account of exemptions and discounts;
- The basis of the calculation of the business rates base, noting that the Council was part of the Greater Manchester Business Rates Retention pilot and retained 99% of yield; and
- The actual level of the council tax was subject to further approval and would be set out in the Council Tax Resolution report to Council in February 2025.

The City Treasurer explained that the report detailed the process for setting the council tax and business rates income bases for 2025/26 and that powers were delegated to him, in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance and Resources. He emphasised that up-to-date information was required to ensure the most accurate position when setting the bases and that the Chair would be requested to exempt these decisions from the call-in procedure to avoid delay.

There were no points or questions raised by the committee.

Decision:

The committee notes that

1. the City Treasurer, in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance and Resources, has delegated powers to:
 - Agree the estimated council tax surplus or deficit for 2024/25;
 - Set the 2025/26 council tax base for tax setting purposes in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2013;
 - Agree the estimated business rates surplus or deficit for 2024/25;
 - Calculate the 2025/26 business rates income for budget setting purposes in accordance with the Non-Domestic Rating (Rates Retention) Regulations;
 - Determine whether the Council should be part of a business rate pooling arrangements with other Greater Manchester local authorities in 2025/26;
 - Set the dates of precept payments to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority in 2025/26.
2. the Chair of Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee will be requested to exempt various Key Decisions regarding this from the call-in procedure.

RGSC/24/92 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 any items for information previously requested by the Committee.

In response to a member's query regarding how the committee's work programme was devised, the Chair explained that the first meeting of the municipal year involved a work programming session which developed the committee's programme for the upcoming year. He stated that if members felt there were any gaps in the work

programme where an item under the remit of the committee was not listed, they could suggest this as an area to bring forward.

The Deputy Chief Executive also highlighted that an extract of the Register of Key Decisions of upcoming decisions within the committee's remit was included in the Overview Report at every meeting. He stated that members could use this to identify areas for the committee to scrutinise further.

Decision:

That the report be noted.

Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 16 January 2025

Present:

Councillor Simcock (Chair) – in the Chair

Councillors Connolly, Evans, Glover, Kilpatrick, Kirkpatrick, Noor, Rasul, Stogia and Wheeler

Also present:

Councillor Akbar, Executive Member for Finance and Resources

RGSC/25/1 Minutes

Decision: That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2024 be approved as a correct record.

RGSC/25/2 Revenue Budget Update and Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2025/26

The committee considered a report of the City Treasurer which provided an update on the revenue budget position and outlines the main announcements from the provisional local government finance settlement 2025/26, which was published 18 December 2024.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Subject to the outcome of the budget consultation, it was expected that the proposed savings of £18.232m, alongside the provisional settlement announcements, would be sufficient to allow a balanced budget to be set for 2025/26;
- Forecast pressures and changes to the 2025/26 budget position;
- A comprehensive spending review would take place in Spring 2025 which would set the funding envelope for local government for the following two years to the end of 2027/28;
- Grant notifications and the implications of these on the Council's position;
- Longer-term funding reform;
- The outcome of the provisional settlement will be considered in light of the consultation results and final options brought forward for decision in February to enable the setting of a balanced budget for 2025/26, and updated forecasts for 2026/27 and 2027/28; and
- Next steps in the budget-setting process.

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

- If Manchester was involved in the review of local government funding distribution formulas to reflect the needs of the authority and residents;
- How confident officers and the Executive Member were that investment in prevention and demand management would help to prevent increased overspend in adults' and children's social care;
- Why £20m had been forecasted each year up to 2028 to address the 2024/25 position as shown in table 1;
- Recognising discrepancies at table 3;
- Requesting clarity to the high-level potential change to budget gap and savings options identified in table 4; and
- The budget allocated for business rates reset, and whether there was any flexibility to this.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources introduced the report and stated that fourteen years of the previous government administration had resulted in a broken finance system, from which Manchester had been disproportionately affected, and that the new Labour government recognised the importance of local government and was resetting this relationship. He stated that the provisional local government finance settlement 2025/26 was the best settlement since 2009 and would provide relief for in-year pressures and allow transformative work going forward. He acknowledged that, despite the positive settlement, eighteen councils across the country were seeking financial support from the government to balance their budgets which he stated gave a picture of the scale of the challenges facing local government. He highlighted the current government's commitment to fairer funding based on deprivation, need and a low council tax base and stated that Manchester's spending power had increased by 9.2% as a result of the settlement, compared to a national average of 6%. He noted continued pressures in demand-led services such as social care and homelessness and that the Council was continuing to progress savings options of £18m, which would be achieved through income generation and efficiencies. He informed the committee that the public consultation on the budget proposals had ended and officers were analysing feedback, with further detail to be provided to the committee in February. He welcomed the government's commitment to multi-year finance settlements and fairer funding and expressed optimism for the future.

In response to a member's query, the City Treasurer confirmed that the Council had responded to a government consultation on the provisional local government finance settlement and was developing a response to a consultation on the comprehensive spending review expected in spring 2025. The Executive Member for Finance and Resources also highlighted the Leader of the Council's role in lobbying for fairer funding in her capacity as the Local Government Association (LGA) Labour Group Leader.

The City Treasurer explained that overspend in adults' and children's social care was in line with other Core Cities. He stated that the settlement addressed some issues

by targeting extra funding to social care and introducing the Children's Social Care Prevention Grant. He also acknowledged challenges and winter pressures facing the NHS and stated that this had led to increased levels of demand on social care despite preventative work having some impact. He assured members that significant work had been undertaken with colleagues in Adults Services, Children's Services and Public Health directorates to understand and try to contain costs. The Executive Member for Finance and Resources emphasised preventative work and stated that social care demands were a national issue due to systemic failure of the previous government and that national legislation and work was required to address challenges in this sector.

The City Treasurer stated that the £20m forecasted additional pressure up to 2028 was to address the impact of the current overspend in future years. He acknowledged the need to address higher spending in social care and explained that directorates had been asked to demonstrate action being taken to tackle overspend and how demand would be mitigated. He advised that any overspend was taken from the general reserve account, which needed to be replenished to ensure financial sustainability, and that more information would be provided to the committee in February.

With regard to the high-level potential change to budget gap and savings options, the City Treasurer advised that the figures in table 4 were cumulative and he agreed to clarify the differences and what the savings in the table related to following the meeting. An amended version of table 3 would also be shared.

In response to queries regarding the business rates reset, the City Treasurer explained that the £15m earmarked for this could be reviewed following the spending review in spring and that suggestions of the funding formula being based on need and deprivation were positive for Manchester. He also confirmed that this budget was held and projected by the Council. The Executive Member for Finance and Resources cited this as an example of the Council being prudent and risk-averse with finances.

Decision:

That the committee endorses the report to the Executive.

RGSC/25/3 Sales, Fees and Charges – Budget 2025/26

The committee considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive and the City Treasurer which provided an update on the current work being undertaken to review all sales fees and charges as part of the 2025/26 budget process to ensure that charges were correct, that the costs of providing the services were recovered and to identify opportunities for increasing existing budgets in order to support the overall Council 2025/26 budget.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- The options developed outlined over £4.772m of proposed additional income budgets which would help to balance the Council's budget and minimise the impact of budget cuts on residents;
- A breakdown of sales, fees and charges across the Corporate Core, Neighbourhoods and Growth and Development directorates;
- The review process and proposed price increases;
- Charges with a direct impact on residents were proposed to be restricted to a maximum increase of 5%;
- Considerations given to the current economic and inflationary environment and the impact on residents and service user; and
- Future opportunities and risk.

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

- The appropriateness of using 'overachievement' to describe increased income from bereavement services;
- The impact of proposed increases to allotment fees, particularly following flooding earlier in the year;
- Suggesting that the committee scrutinise invest-to-save options and income generation and governance of the enforcement service;
- Proposals to increase income in libraries and how this might disproportionately impact low-income service users;
- Requesting further detail on the savings for Corporate and Events;
- How advertising types would be expanded and how this might impact the look and aesthetic of public spaces;
- How increased parking charges would be applied and the impact of this on city centre businesses; and
- How public feedback would be incorporated into fees and changes and if further reviews would be undertaken.

The Directorate Head of Finance introduced the report and explained that the overall budget in 2024/25 for sales, fees and charges amounted to £132m and a shortfall was forecasted for this financial year. He explained that it was proposed to increase the income budget by £4.7m through increased costs and recovery and assumptions in areas beyond the Council's control, such as government-imposed fees, and that this would support the wider Council budget. He stated that work was ongoing to finalise some of the proposed increases and final proposals would be submitted for consideration in February.

In response to queries regarding the proposed increase to allotment fees, the Directorate Head of Finance explained that there had not been an increase to these fees for a number of years and that a benchmarking exercise would be undertaken against the fees charged by other local authorities. It was also stated that the service

would look into mitigations for those with allotments affected by flooding in early January. The Executive Member for Finance and Resources explained that these proposals were developed before the flooding and that the Council recognised the need for a sensitive approach to communicating any increase in fees to those affected.

The Directorate Head of Finance also noted a member's comment regarding the use of the term 'overachievement' to describe increased income from bereavement services.

Members were advised that work was ongoing to understand how best to increase income through libraries and that Equality Impact Assessments would be undertaken for each proposal.

The Directorate Head of Finance explained that £375k of the proposed savings of £400k identified by the Commercial and Events teams for 2025/26 related to activities such as music concerts in Heaton Park in the summer with the remaining £25k saving arising from increased commerciality of spaces in and around the city.

In response to a query regarding advertising income, the committee was advised that annual inflationary uplifts were built into advertising contracts and reflected in the sales, fees and charges budget. The Directorate Head of Finance also explained that advertising income included a performance-related element whereby a share of profit derived from contractor over-performance was provided to the Council. With regard to look and aesthetic, the committee was informed that advertising infrastructure installed along the Ring Road was subject to planning permission. The Chair advised the committee that a further report on advertising income was scheduled for February.

The committee was advised that fees for Council-maintained car parks and off-street parking were increased in late 2024 following a review of fees imposed by private operators and other Core Cities. The Directorate Head of Finance acknowledged a challenge in providing capital investment for car parks with affordability and the Council's ambition to encourage the use of public transport and active travel methods.

It was also stated that some increased fees were part of the wider budget proposals and were included in the overall public consultation, which allowed residents and service users to provide feedback.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources commented that many services had not increased their fees for a number of years and that income generation was important in enabling the Council to balance its budget and to protect frontline services.

Decision:

That the committee

1. notes the report, and
2. requests that an item on income generation and governance arrangements within the Enforcement service be added to the work programme.

RGSC/25/4 Imposition of a 100% Council Tax premium on empty, furnished properties

The committee considered a report of the Head of Corporate Revenues which confirmed a decision made by the Executive on 17 January 2024, introduced on 1 April 2024, to increase the council tax on empty properties with the aim of increasing the supply of residential properties and maximising occupation in Manchester. The report also reviewed exemptions to a blanket imposition introduced by the government on 1 November 2024.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- From 1 April 2024, empty, unfurnished properties paid the 100% long term empty premium after one year instead of two years;
- From 1 April 2025, in line with legislation, empty, furnished properties would pay up to a 100% premium from the date that they became empty;
- Adopting these powers would generate additional council tax revenue of up to £3.7m, of which Manchester would retain £3.1m;
- A 12-month exemption to this applied to dwellings that were actively marketed for sale or let and empty dwellings that required or were undergoing major repairs or structural alterations;
- Behavioural change and liability amendments; and
- Impact on residents.

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

- How the Council would know if a property was being actively marketed for sale or rent and how it would try to prevent phantom tenancies;
- How the Council had projected the additional council tax revenue as a result of adopting the policy;
- What the impact would be on Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs);
- When the committee could assess the impact of the policy;
- Recognising that probate could be a long process, and querying what flexibility the Council offered with regard to council tax payments on properties under probate;
- What levers the Council had to bring empty homes back into use where probate was granted to somebody living abroad;

- What flexibility the Council offered with regards to empty properties that were difficult to sell due to cladding issues;
- Recognising that success of the policies would be demonstrated through a decrease in the number of empty properties in the city;
- How many properties were currently empty in Manchester; and
- How council tax would be collected where a property was empty due to the resident being in prison.

The Head of Corporate Revenues informed the committee that a 100% council tax premium for properties that were empty and unfurnished for more than one year had been applied from 1 April 2024 and that, from 1 April 2025, a 100% council tax premium on empty and furnished properties would be applied from the day they become empty. He explained that the rationale behind these policies was to increase housing supply in the city. The committee was also advised of government-assigned exemptions to these premiums, including properties actively for sale or rent.

In response to members' queries, the Head of Corporate Revenues explained that evidence of property viewings and communication with estate agents would be required to qualify for an exemption to the 100% premium where a property was marketed for sale or rent. Proof of residence, such as changes to bank accounts and driving licences, would also be checked to monitor phantom tenancies. It was also highlighted that the Council could visit properties and used Google Street View to determine occupancy.

The Head of Corporate Revenues stated that there were approximately 2500 properties in Manchester which had been empty for over a year and would be required to pay the premium from 1 April 2025. He advised that the Council would be writing to 800 of these households in the coming weeks and anticipated that some properties would be declared as lived-in or as HMOs in response. Projected income from this policy was based on the current number of empty properties in the city and the Head of Corporate Revenues acknowledged that it would lead to behaviour change and expressed confidence that significant income would be generated as a result.

In response to a query regarding channels for residents to provide feedback on the policy, the Head of Corporate Revenues highlighted the Council's complaints process but reiterated that the application of the premium was a statutory capability awarded by the government which the Council had agreed to adopt. He also highlighted the Discretionary Council Tax Payment Scheme which could be awarded where a resident would be seriously disadvantaged beyond their capabilities by the premium.

With regard to the impact on HMOs, the committee was advised that the premium would not apply to HMOs and that landlords in this instance would need to advise the Council that a property was used as an HMO. These properties were subject to

normal council tax bands with the cost of this typically passed onto tenants through their rent.

The Deputy Chief Executive highlighted the diligence of the Corporate Revenues team and stated that officers would apply professional judgement and use all available resources to determine whether a property was empty. He stated that this policy aimed to increase the range of available properties in Manchester without compromising on quality or unduly disadvantaging residents.

In response to queries regarding probate, the Head of Corporate Revenues confirmed that the Council would offer flexibility in this circumstance and could put a hold on council tax payments until probate was granted, if made aware. He stated that exemptions were applied to properties under probate and would provide further detail following the meeting.

It was also confirmed that where an empty property was proving difficult to sell due to cladding issues, a one-year exemption would automatically be applied under this policy so long as the property remained actively marketed. The Head of Corporate Revenues also highlighted cases which had received an additional council tax exemption due to cladding issues.

The Head of Corporate Revenues acknowledged that many empty, furnished properties were genuine second homes and that the premium was unlikely to lead to these properties being sold. He advised that the Corporate Revenues team worked with Housing to help landlords bring empty, unfurnished properties back into use, including where probate was granted to people living overseas.

With regard to council tax charges where a resident is in prison, it was advised following the meeting that a resident was exempt from paying council tax for the duration of their sentence. The Head of Corporate Revenues explained that homes could be repossessed by the mortgage provider, landlord or housing association where a resident was sentenced to prison for a significant length of time.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources stated that legislation regarding council tax premiums had been in place since 2012 and had the desired effect in bringing a number of properties onto the market. He acknowledged that not all empty properties would be marketed for sale or rent but it would provide greater help for residents to access a greater variety of properties on the housing market.

Decision:

That the committee

1. notes the report;
2. requests that further detail on the impact of this policy be included in the next Revenues and Benefits Update report; and

3. requests that a breakdown of empty properties, both furnished and unfurnished, and the length of time empty be provided to the committee.

RGSC/25/5 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 any items for information previously requested by the Committee.

The Chair clarified that the meeting on 26 February 2025 would commence at 4:30pm.

In response to a member's query, the Governance and Scrutiny Team Leader recognised that some entries listed on the Register of Key Decision dated back to 2023 and explained that this was regularly reviewed to ensure accuracy and to monitor decisions yet to be taken. She also advised that decisions must be published on the Register for a minimum of 28 days and that the due dates attached to individual decisions constituted the earliest that decision could be taken.

Decision:

That the report be noted.

Environment, Climate Change and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2024

Present:

Councillor Shilton Godwin – in the Chair
Councillors Hussain, Kirwin-McGinley, Mumtaz, Richards and Wiest

Apologies: Councillors Ilyas and Razaq

Also present:

Councillor Rawlins, Executive Member for Clean Air, Environment and Transport
Councillor McCaul, Deputy Executive Member for Clean Air, Environment and Transport
Councillor Igbon, Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods
Councillor Ahmed Ali, Deputy Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods
Councillor Akbar, Executive Member for Finance and Resources
Councillor Simcock, Chair of Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee
Mark Pollard, Head of Technical and Project Delivery, AGR Renewables

ECCNSC/24/48 Urgent Business – Chorlton Cycleway Scheme

The Chair informed the Committee that the Chorlton Cycleway scheme had recently won the category of ‘Best Completed Scheme’, awarded by Walk Ride GM, a group that campaigned for walking, wheeling and cycling in Greater Manchester.

The Chair presented the award to the Executive Member for Clean Air, Environment and Transport and the Director of Highways.

ECCNSC/24/49 Minutes

Decision

To approve the minutes of the Environment, Climate Change and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 7 November 2024 as a correct record.

ECCNSC/24/50 Local Area Energy Plan – Progress Update

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director, Growth and Development that provided an update on Manchester City Council’s activity in relation to the city’s use of energy and how the city could move from using fossil fuels to greener, renewable energy supply, and ultimately supporting Manchester’s journey to zero carbon by 2038.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;

- Describing that Local Area Energy Plans (LAEP) provided a roadmap for achieving Manchester's zero carbon target from an energy perspective;
- Describing progress to date since the last update report to Committee in July 2023;
- Discussion of the Net Zero Accelerator programme and Manchester's Local Net Zero Accelerator;
- Discussion of the opportunities to drive net zero investment as part of the regeneration plan for Wythenshawe;
- Progress and opportunities identified across different asset classes; and
- Next steps.

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

- Welcoming the progress reported and noting that this development contributed to a just transition and would contribute to addressing fuel poverty;
- How would the impact be assessed and reported;
- What were the environmental impacts of LAEP;
- An update on the options for delivery of a heat network in Wythenshawe; and
- Noting that it was reported that 12% of Manchester's total carbon emissions came from commercial buildings and that just 9% of commercial buildings in Manchester (170 buildings over 5,000m²) were responsible for over 60% of emissions from this sector and what was being done to address this.

The Net Zero Programme Lead stated that the issue of fuel poverty and a just transition was fully understood and acknowledged, adding that the LAEP would support the Manchester journey to becoming zero carbon by 2038. She added that the delivery of the LAEP would be evidence based and would inform decision making and the priority of delivery and investment. She said this approach would also inform the pipeline of associated projects as this work progressed. She said that ongoing evaluation and reporting was also required to be submitted to the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero.

The Net Zero Programme Lead commented that capacity had been increased in the team to deliver the work and consideration was being given as to the future reporting of the impact of the LAEP, noting that the carbon emissions report for the city, produced by the Climate Change Agency/Partnership would capture the impact of the LAEP in future years.

The Assistant Director, Infrastructure & Environment commented that the LAEP would support opportunities to develop new initiatives and delivery of strategies such as the Manchester Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy. She said the LAEP would also provide an opportunity to group projects and workstreams so that they were commercially attractive and best support residents and communities.

The Net Zero Programme Lead stated that whilst the report described the approach in one neighbourhood the development of the LAEP was mindful of the city as a whole and they were mindful of the fact that additional developments, such as an increase in electric vehicles would result in an increased demand for electricity. She reported that conversations were ongoing with Electricity North West to understand and model those projections.

The Net Zero Programme Lead stated that a feasibility study was underway to explore options for delivery of a potential heat network in Wythenshawe. She said this would also include exploring new innovations and technology as alternatives to natural gas.

The Net Zero Programme Lead commented that the Council had less direct control over commercial buildings however this sector had been identified as a priority action for the Climate Change Agency/Partnership.

The Executive Member for Clean Air, Environment and Transport commented that conversations continued to address the issue of emissions from buildings that the Council had no direct control over. She added that the Committee would continue to be kept updated on the design and delivery of relevant projects, and she welcomed the comments and continued challenge from the Committee.

Decision

To note the report.

ECCNSC/24/51 Manchester City Council Power Purchase Agreement – Update Report

The Committee considered the report of the City Treasurer that provided a progress report on the Council's renewable energy Power Purchase Agreement (PPA).

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Noting that the scheme where the Manchester PPA would be provided from was the Bicker Fen Solar Project, a Solar PV and Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) hybrid renewable energy scheme being developed at Bicker Fen in Lincolnshire;
- Upon completion, the project was designed to generate clean renewable electricity equivalent to providing power for 18,000 households, while the adjacent 50MW BESS system would allow the energy generated to be stored and provide essential grid stability services;
- Describing that delivery of this project would contribute to the long-term reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and support the UK's commitment to a sustainable future;
- Noting that the development had been designed to mitigate flood risks;
- Describing the social value delivered through this project; and
- Information in relation to the ongoing operation of the PPA.

The Committee welcomed Councillor Simcock, Chair of Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee. He stated that he was satisfied with the progress reported to date. He enquired if officers were confident that the project could be delivered on-time and in budget. He further enquired if the National Grid was prepared to work with the project.

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

- Welcoming the report and the progress reported;
- Thanking the officers for arranging a Members briefing on this project prior to the meeting;
- Was there any risk to the Manchester PPA offtake commencing by 30th September 2025;
- Noting the conversation on the previous agenda item and the projected increase in demand for electricity, would the PPA be able to meet this increased demand;
- The activity described demonstrated civic leadership on the issue of climate change; and
- Welcoming the reported social value annual contribution to Manchester of £38,000.

The Assistant Director, Commercial Governance and Corporate Energy commented that the issue of risk had been modelled and considered for a number of factors, including projected electricity offtake volumes and financial risk analysis, and that a detailed modelling exercises had been undertaken as part of the project planning. She said this modelling also included the zero carbon pathway and projections. She commented that a full equality, diversity and inclusion impact assessment had also been undertaken. She said that the PPA would be providing c85% of the Council's forecast electricity requirements and this would be monitored. She said that additional power would be supplied from the existing provider arrangements, noting that there was a synergy between these arrangements to mitigate risk.

The Strategic Lead, Resources & Programmes commented that the PPA would significantly contribute to the zero carbon ambition for the city alongside the wealth of other activities and work that was regularly reported to the Committee.

Mark Pollard, Technical Director at AGR Renewables, commented that they continued to work with the National Grid and that there was vigorous oversight of the project, and this project remained on target for commencement of the PPA on 30 September 2025 date. He further commented that a site visit from Members could be accommodated, if required.

The Executive Member for Clean Air, Environment and Transport expressed her appreciation to the Committee for their continued support and challenge during the delivery of this project. She further paid tribute to the project team at AGR Renewables, noting that they had been open to constructive dialogue throughout the whole process.

Decision

To note the report.

ECCNSC/24/52 Revenue Budget Update 2025 - 2026

The Committee considered the report of the City Treasurer that provided a high-level overview of the latest budget position for the Council in respect of its 2025/26 budget. Each scrutiny committee was invited to consider the officer developed options which

were within its remit and to make recommendations to the Executive before it agreed to the final budget proposals in February 2025.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Noting that the Council was forecasting an estimated budget shortfall of £101m in 2025/26, £126m in 2026/27, and £164m by 2027/28;
- Mitigations approved in previous budget rounds included approved savings of £32m, the use of c£18m smoothing reserves in each of the three years, and a Council Tax increase of 4.99% (c£11m) a year. After these mitigations the gap reduced to £29m in 2025/26, £41m in 2026/27 and £77m by 2027/28;
- Noting that councils faced a funding gap of £6.2 billion over the next two years, and this needed to be considered in the context of an estimated £24.5 billion in cuts and efficiencies in service spending that councils had made since 2010/11;
- Noting that over the same period the Council had delivered over £440m of savings;
- The 2023/24 outturn position reported to Executive 5 June 2024, reported an overspend of £5.3m. The second monitoring report of 2024/25 was considered by Executive on 13 November, reporting a forecast overspend of £20m. The ongoing implications of this overspend must be considered as part of the budget setting process;
- Consideration of the Government's Autumn Statement, noting that a key headline for Local Government was that Core Spending Power would increase by 3.2% in real terms in 2025/26;
- Noting that Ministers had indicated additional funding would be targeted through a deprivation-based approach; and
- A summary of the budget position, noting that the final budget position for 2025/26 would be confirmed at February 2025 Executive. This would be after the Finance Settlement was received and key decisions confirming the Council Tax and Business Rates tax base to be used to determine the collection fund position had been made in January.

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

- Noting that the budget needed to be considered in the context of 15 years of Public Sector cuts and austerity;
- Expressing concern regarding the use of reserves and the potential risk this potentially exposed the Council to, noting how important these had been during the local response to the Covid pandemic;
- How would the funding from the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) packaging scheme be distributed across Greater Manchester;
- When would the Council next receive a shareholder dividend from Manchester Airport; and
- How did the budget and the associated officer proposals align with the Our Manchester Strategy (OMS).

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources said that the General Fund reserve balance at 31 March 2025 was forecast at £23.4m, adding that this was an appropriate level for Manchester. He said that any overspend, referring to the

forecast overspend of £20m, would need to be met from this reserve fund and the General Fund reserve would need to be topped up in subsequent years. He commented that in previous years the dividend received from the Airport was used as smoothing reserves and could only be used once. He said that a dividend was not expected from the Airport in 2025/26 and possibly also not in 2026/27.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources stated that details relating to the allocation of funding realised from the EPR were yet to be finalised and the spending of this funding would be in accordance with Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs guidance.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources stated that following approval of a budget option, including Council Tax charges, these would be accompanied by an equality impact assessment and a statutory consultation. He clarified that that Council Tax assumptions were calculated on a Council Tax increase of 4.99% (c£11m) a year. The report described that a public consultation on proposed Council Tax levels and the savings measures put forward by officers would open on 25 November and run until 12 January 2025.

The Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) commented that all of the officer proposals presented in the report had been developed using the principles of the OMS. He said the options presented efficiency savings, increased income generation and transformation of services, and little or no service reduction to contribute to delivering a balanced budget. In response to a specific question relating to savings to be achieved through purchasing green energy he said that further detail would be provided outside of the meeting.

The Head of Finance, Core and Place responded to a question raised in relation to the table presented at section 4.3 of the report and clarified that this presented the current overall Council position. He said that this information would be updated following the release of the Local Government Finance Settlement, expected towards the end of the month.

Decision

To note the report.

ECCNSC/24/53 Neighbourhoods Budget 2025-2028

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) that provided a service overview and key priorities including an update on the Climate Change Action Plan, along with the latest draft budgets for the services within the remit of this scrutiny committee. The draft budget contained details of the already approved savings and investments, along with initial thoughts on other areas for consideration and comment as part of the budget process in order to help ensure an overall balanced budget.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;

- An overview and description of services and identified priorities;
- Service budgets and proposed changes;
- Savings plan for 2025/2026, noting that as part of identifying further savings options the initial priority had been to protect service delivery wherever possible, and this had included looking to increase income generation opportunities where possible;
- Commissioning and procurement priorities;
- Work force implications; and
- Future opportunities, risks and policy/strategy considerations.

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

- Further information was sought in relation to the proposal to increased receipts from fixed penalty notices;
- Would the housing providers who would be required to fund the annual £47k disposal costs be able to meet this cost;
- What were the implications of the proposed reduction of 10% to the Neighbourhoods Development Budget;
- More information was requested in relation to the increased income from concession contracts; and
- Noting the experience in Alexandra Park, more use of Community Service orders should be used to maintain parks across the city.

The Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) commented that whilst the Council worked with a range of stakeholders, community groups and volunteers and their added value was recognised and appreciated they would never be used to replace statutory Council roles and responsibilities. He further commented that the approach adopted was to maximise the income generated from concessions in parks. With regard to the section of the report that referred to the Housing Provider, he said that this was to bring this in line with the other providers.

The Director of Communities stated that the increased fixed penalty notices charges would relate to those issued for fly tipping, fly posting and littering. She further commented that the Neighbourhoods Development Budget was available to support proactive and reactive initiatives in neighbourhoods in response to agreed priorities and the proposal for a reduction in the Neighbourhoods Development Budget, if accepted would be spread across the three Neighbourhood Teams.

The Chair, in concluding consideration of the budget items acknowledged the significant amount of work undertaken by the Executive Member for Finance and Resources and officers to bring forward the options to deliver a balanced budget.

Decision

To note the report.

ECCNSC/24/54 Neighbourhood Compliance Team Report

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) that provided an overview of activities carried out by the Neighbourhood Compliance

service area which were part of the Community Safety, Compliance and Enforcement Service.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Providing a description of the remit and responsibilities of the different teams;
- Providing a number of detailed case studies across a range of activities; and
- Consideration of challenges and future initiatives.

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

- Welcoming the report, noting that it provided the reader with an insight into the breadth of work that was undertaken on behalf of the residents of the city;
- Requesting that future reports include comparative data to allow improvements in service delivery and requests for service to be tracked;
- Did the Council have any influence as to where any unpaid work was delivered as part of the Magistrates Court sanctions;
- What was being done with flats above commercial properties;
- Was there any funding available to deliver additional alleygating schemes;
- Was there any funding available to deliver any additional CCTV equipment to help detect and prosecute perpetrators of fly tipping;
- Had there been any cost benefit analysis undertaken to understand if it would be more cost effective to offer unlimited free bulky collections rather than pay to have fly tipping removed;
- How many complaints were resolved informally;
- The importance of bringing empty homes back into use;
- Littering from vehicles; and
- Were there any legal encampments in Manchester for the traveller community.

The Head of Compliance Enforcement and Community Safety commented that the new reporting system that was being introduced would allow for comparative data to be extracted and this would be included in future reports. Noting the comments expressed regarding flats above commercial properties she made reference to work of the Intensive Neighbourhood Management Pilot that brought a range of Council departments together to deliver targeted activities. She stated that consideration would also be given as to how the impact of this and similar activities such as Action Days were captured and reported. She further advised that CCTV was a limited resource, and priority was given as to where this was deployed to tackle particular hotspots. She further commented that at present there was no additional funding available to deliver further alleygating schemes. She also confirmed that at present there were no legal encampments in Manchester for the traveller community.

The Head of Compliance Enforcement and Community Safety stated that there was a dedicated Empty Homes Team within the Homelessness Unit that worked with property owners, with the aim of bringing these properties back into use, noting that there was a variety of reasons as to why a property could be empty.

The Neighbourhood Manager – Neighbourhood Compliance commented that the sanctions imposed by the courts were solely the discretion of the magistrate. He commented that approximately two thirds of complaints were resolved informally. The Head of Compliance Enforcement and Community Safety added that they were currently in dialogue with the Probation Service to discuss where any unpaid work was delivered, noting a comment made by a Member regarding the positive impact delivery of this work had in a park in her ward.

The Neighbourhood Manager – Neighbourhood Compliance said that enforcement action would be taken in the form of a Fixed Penalty Notice against the registered owner of a vehicle where litter had been dropped from and all reports would be investigated. He further added that any witnesses could be required to attend court to provide evidence.

The Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods stated that the issue of fly tipping was a national issue, commenting that in the previous three months there had been a reported 11,300 cases in Manchester. She said the cost to the Council of disposing of waste needed to be taken into consideration and more emphasis needed to be given to opportunities for community reusing and recycling. She said the Clean and Green Board was looking at this issue of fly tipping as a priority, noting the discussion in relation to the Our Manchester Strategy and the priority identified for Neighbourhoods to be attractive places with good homes, facilities and green spaces.

The Chair, in concluding this item of business, acknowledged the significant amount of work undertaken by the team on behalf of the residents of the city and she requested that the Committee's appreciation be relayed to all staff concerned.

Decision

To note the report.

ECCNSC/24/55 Overview of Food, Health and Safety and Airport Team

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) that provided an overview of the Food, Health & Safety and Airport service.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Discussion of the approach to food safety, hygiene and standards;
- Airport Border Control Post (BCP) and Port Health Authority, noting that Manchester Airport was designated as a BCP, meaning that imported products intended for commercial use in Great Britain could arrive at the BCP and after undergoing certain checks satisfactorily, could then enter the country;
- Discussion of the enforcement of Health and Safety at Work legislation in England, noting this responsibility was split between the HSE (Health and Safety Executive) and Local Authorities;
- Discussion of Public Health protection in relation to infectious disease control;

- Advice available to businesses, noting that the level of advice that could be provided during routine day to day work was limited due to resource and sometimes businesses required or requested more detailed advice;
- Providing a number of detailed case studies across a range of activities; and
- Consideration of challenges and future initiatives.

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

- If concerns were raised about a particular business premises would this result in enquiries being made into any other business the owner had control of;
- More needed to be done to raise awareness of the different rating systems;
- Expressing concern regarding the frequency of inspections set by the new Food Standards Delivery Model (FSDM) for local authority officers; and
- Expressing disappointment that it was not currently mandatory in England for food businesses to display their Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) rating.

The Compliance & Enforcement Specialist stated that the team followed all national guidance and clarified that FSDM related to food standards and not hygiene standards. She commented that if any concerns were raised in relation to food standards they would always investigate. She said that if concerns were raised regarding standards at a premises a risk assessment would be undertaken to inform any further enquiries and inspections of businesses controlled by that owner and provided examples of different scenarios. In response to a specific question relating to the transporting of food, noting the proliferation of bicycle food courier services she said they would investigate any complaints regarding unhygienic transportation.

In regard to the requirement to display Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) ratings, she commented that she acknowledged the Committee's frustration. She said that whilst the team worked with businesses regarding awareness of this issue the team was restricted to the amount of capacity they could dedicate to any specific proactive work. The Neighbourhood Manager commented that the FSA did work proactively with online platforms such as Just Eat to encourage them to promote ratings. She commented that the FSA also lobbied for a change to the national legislation.

The Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods commented that she would continue to lobby the government for a change in the legislation and called for it to be mandatory in England for food businesses to display their Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) rating.

The Chair, in concluding this item of business, acknowledged the significant amount of work undertaken by the team on behalf of the residents of the city and she requested that the Committee's appreciation be relayed to all staff concerned.

Decision

To note the report.

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Chief Executive that provided an update on the development of the new Our Manchester Strategy for the city covering the period 2025 to 2035. It built on a previous report to Scrutiny Committees in July 2024.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background, noting that The Our Manchester Strategy 2025 was the ten-year strategy for the city and was due to expire in 2025;
- Providing a summary of the second round of engagement activity;
- The findings that were most relevant to the remit of the Committee;
- An overview of the new strategy, noting that the OMS would focus on twelve priorities over the next ten years; and
- Following formal approval, the OMS 2025-20235 would be launched in April 2025.

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

- Recognising the range of positive community engagement, in particular with the Manchester Deaf Centre and the use of British Sign Language;
- Noting the experience of the Covid pandemic, would the OMS be flexible to respond to the changing needs of the city;
- Noting the relatively low figures presented in relation to the question asked about the priority about climate change;
- Noting that the views of young people were underrepresented in the consultation responses;
- Consideration needed to be given to the visual images used in the final published document; and
- As democratically elected representative of residents, how were the views of Councillors captured in the priorities.

The Head of City of Policy noted the comment made regarding the images used and stated that there existed a wealth of images that could be drawn upon to ensure the final document reflected the population of the city. He stated that the OMS was a ten-year strategy, and the priorities were flexible to respond to the changing needs of the city. He further commented that the OMS Strategy was a high-level strategy that articulated the priorities and ambitions for the city, and this would inform a range of specific Council strategies, such as the Housing Strategy. He said that an implementation plan would also be devised to accompany the OMS. He commented that progress on delivery of the OMS would be captured and reported in the annual State of the City report.

The Head of City of Policy stated that the Council had a distinct and unique civic leadership role on the issue of climate change and referred to the responses received in relation to climate change and commented that these included a range of views, including climate change deniers and people questioning how the Council could respond and influence such a huge global issue. The Executive Member for Clean Air, Environment and Transport commented that the Council had made significant progress in reducing its own carbon emissions and that the new Manchester City Council Climate Change Action Plan for 2025-30, that was currently

being developed would include specific consideration of communications and resident engagement.

The Strategy & Economic Policy Manager stated that an Equalities Impact Assessment had been undertaken to inform the approach to the consultation exercise. He commented that a number of in person events had been undertaken, including Eid in the Park that had resulted in a large number of conversations, but not necessarily resulted in formal questionnaires being completed, however a summary of those conversations had been collated and included in the analysis. Regarding young people, he stated that a significant amount of intelligence and information had already been collected as part of the consultation exercise undertaken as part of the UNICEF Child Friendly City work and this wealth of data had also been utilised to inform the priorities, similarly the Age Friendly work undertaken was also captured. He commented that he welcomed the positive feedback from the Committee and thanked the range of external partners who had also supported this activity to deliver this work.

The Strategy & Economic Policy Manager commented that briefing sessions had been facilitated and had been a useful resource to inform where engagement activities had been targeted. He said that democratic approval would be provided as the report had been considered by all six scrutiny Committees and the final OMS would be subject to formal approval by the Executive and Council.

Decision

The Committee recommend that the Chair of the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee considers including an item on their work programme that considers community engagement with African and Pakistani communities and those of the Muslim faith in Manchester.

ECCNSC/24/57 Overview Report

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

The Chair informed the Committee that the Clean Air report would be vacated from the 13 February 2025 agenda to allow enough time to consider the Aviation and Manchester Airport item.

A Member requested that a report that considered the impact and outcomes of the Intensive Neighbourhood Management Pilot be included in the list of items to be scheduled, noting that this would likely be scheduled in the next municipal year.

Decision

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

Environment, Climate Change and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2025

Present:

Councillor Shilton Godwin – in the Chair

Councillors Hussain, Ilyas, Kirwin-McGinley, Mumtaz, Razaq, Richards and Wiest

Apologies: Not applicable

Also present:

Councillor Rawlins, Executive Member for Clean Air, Environment and Transport

Councillor McCaul, Deputy Executive Member for Clean Air, Environment and Transport

Councillor White, Executive Member for Housing and Development

Samantha Nicholson, Director, Manchester Climate Change Agency

ECCNSC/25/01 Minutes

Decision

To approve the minutes of the Environment, Climate Change and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 5 December 2024 as a correct record.

ECCNSC/25/02 The Manchester Local Plan

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director (Growth and Development) that provided an update on the emerging Manchester Local Plan.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background, noting that the Local Plan guided decisions on future development proposals and addressed the needs and opportunities of the area;
- Providing a brief summary of the recently updated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), focusing on the aspects of particular relevance to the Local Plan;
- A brief summary of the existing policy framework contained in the adopted Core Strategy to note how specific issues were currently considered;
- Consideration of the Places for Everyone Joint Local Plan, noting that the emerging Manchester Local Plan needed to include an evaluation as to where existing policy might continue to be fit for purpose; and where revised or new policies would be appropriate; and
- Key policy aspects that were being considered within the emerging Local Plan.

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

- Commenting that the document referenced within the report, 'Net Zero New Buildings: Shaping Manchester's Local Plan' was a very useful document and enquiring if the 7 recommendations within that report would be adopted;
- How would the Local Plan influence neighbourhood planning and design, noting issues arising relating to waste management, car parking and pavement parking as a result of intensification;
- More information was sought in relation to Affordable Housing and the specific references to looked after children;
- Planning should allow for existing domestic properties to be developed to support families to remain living in their homes;
- What powers existed to ensure that any adaptations to existing domestic properties were appropriate and met energy standards;
- What were the transitional arrangements to ensure best practice was adopted by developers;
- How would any changes announced by Government be incorporated into the developing Local Plan;
- Information was sought in relation to the West Gorton Sponge Park;
- Was there any intention to review the land identified as green belt; and
- Did the expertise exist within the Council to assess the statements provided by developers to demonstrate how carbon emissions would be minimised.

The Planning and Infrastructure Manager said that the Planning Department had been closely involved with the development of the 'Net Zero New Buildings: Shaping Manchester's Local Plan' report and the intention was to consider how the recommendations contained within could be adopted across a range of policies. He said that the Local Plan would be subject to a viability appraisal to test the recommendations and where they could not be incorporated the reasons for that would be articulated.

The Planning and Infrastructure Manager said that the issue of neighbourhood intensification was acknowledged, and they were working closely with colleagues across the Neighbourhood Teams as this work progressed. With reference to the specific question relating to looked after children he advised that further information would be provided outside of the meeting.

The Planning and Infrastructure Manager said that in regard to assessing statements provided by developers to demonstrate how carbon emissions would be minimised, this would be undertaken by Council officers and supported by appropriate external expert assistance.

The Director of Planning, Building Control and Licensing commented that domestic properties could be developed within the permitted development rules. She said that currently there were no plans nationally proposed to change the existing rules relating to permitted development, noting that these rights allowed householders to improve and extend their homes without the need to apply for planning permission. Regarding the standards of such permitted development and energy efficiency she said this would be subject to Building Control approval, reiterating that this was distinct and separate from planning permission.

The Director of Planning, Building Control and Licensing said that she acknowledged the time taken to develop the Local Plan, however they continued to work and negotiate with developers to promote best practice, both in terms of design and materials. She provided an example of the delivery of swift boxes that were included as part of a new build development to support biodiversity.

The Director of Planning, Building Control and Licensing confirmed that there was no intention to review the identified green belt.

The Strategic Director, Growth & Development described that the West Gorton Sponge Park had been delivered through Horizon Europe funding and opened in June 2020. The Sponge Park design included a number of sustainable urban drainage features. She said this site was recognised internationally as an example of best practice. She said that to replicate this specific design feature would require substantial funding. The Planning and Infrastructure Manager added that water management and sustainable drainage and biodiversity was considered across all developments, including highways works. He noted that the Local Plan can influence development proposals within the city but there was a need to recognise the wider geographical aspect to water management that required investment and cooperation at a catchment level scale (i.e. working with neighbouring areas including Oldham, Tameside and Stockport plus organisations such as United Utilities and the Environment Agency). He said that a number of grants were available to support community groups deliver biodiversity projects. He said that further information and examples of good practice would be included in the Green and Blue Strategy and Implementation Plan report that was scheduled for consideration at the Committee's 6 March 2025 meeting. The Chair provided an example of the Friends of Chorlton Park who were about to commence work on a sponge meadow project. She added that this group had visited the Gorton project for information and research in advance of design.

The Planning and Infrastructure Manager added that water management, sustainable drainage and biodiversity was considered across all developments, including highways works. He advised that a number of grants were available to support community groups deliver biodiversity projects. He said that further information and examples of good practice would be included in the Green and Blue Strategy and Implementation Plan report that was scheduled for consideration at the Committee's 6 March 2025 meeting. The Chair provided an example of the Friends of Chorlton Park who were about to commence work on a sponge meadow project.

The Executive Member for Clean Air, Environment and Transport said that she would work with officers to compile a list of grant funding sources that were available to community groups to support delivery of biodiversity projects, and this would be circulated to Members. She further commented that the experience and learning from West Gorton Sponge Park was used as an example of best practice when discussions and negotiations were undertaken with developers.

Decision

To note the report.

ECCNSC/25/03 2020-25 Climate Change Action Plan 2024/25 Mid-Year Progress Report

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive that provided an update and overview of progress made in delivering the Council's refreshed Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) during Quarter 1 and 2 2024-25 (April – September 2024).

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Key achievements in the reporting period; and
- Progress update on development of the CCAP 2025-30.

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

- Would the remaining target of a 16.5% emissions reduction of the current 5-year carbon budget be met;
- What were the lessons learnt that would inform the next five year CCAP;
- Welcoming that Manchester had launched an initiative to become the world's first "Carbon Literate City" as part of the drive to become zero carbon by 2038;
- Further information was sought in relation to Carbon Literacy training and the aim to train the equivalent of 15% of the city's population, 85,349 people to become certified as Carbon Literate;
- Information was requested on the "Bee Cup" scheme;
- Noting the positive engagement with schools and young people as part of the European city of cycling programme of activities and what was the legacy of this work;
- Did the Council and other relevant partners work with local schools and colleges to promote green skills and jobs to support and deliver the scale of housing retrofit work that would be required;
- What had happened to the 100 duvets collected by the Council's Neighbourhood Teams as part of the reported coordinated initiative to reduce waste; and
- Behaviour change amongst residents was important to contribute to addressing climate change and this needed to be supported by appropriate communications with residents.

The Strategic Lead – Resources & Programmes stated that the modelling indicated that the current 5-year carbon budget would be achieved. He said that in the event of this not being achieved any outstanding carbon budget would be incorporated into the overall remaining target for 2038. He stated that the lessons learnt that would be incorporated into the next five year plan would be discussed in detail during the next agenda item.

The Principal Resources & Programmes Officer provided a brief summary of how the Council's carbon budget had been set and targets proportioned to 2038. She acknowledged that targets would be testing going forward towards 2038 but said that the initial actions were important to deliver as they would continue to contribute to the overall Council's emissions reduction.

The Zero Carbon Manager said that the “Bee Cup” was a reusable cup scheme, launched in September 2024 by the University of Manchester, in partnership with In Our Nature and Manchester City Council. Several locations on campus and along Oxford Road now offered customers the use of Bee Cups for free (if returned within 14 days). She said an evaluation exercise would be undertaken of the scheme and the findings of this would be circulated to Members when available.

The Zero Carbon Manager said that the aim to achieve 15% of the city’s population certified as Carbon Literate was in early development. and the intention would be to focus initially on businesses. She noted that the Committee would be receiving a substantive update report on the topic of Carbon Literacy at the 13 February 2025 meeting. In response to the specific question regarding collected duvets, she said that these had been washed and redistributed by the Neighbourhood Teams.

The Executive Member for Clean Air, Environment and Transport said that the most current figures relating to the number of people trained in Carbon Literacy was included in the Zero Carbon Newsletter that was periodically circulated to all Members.

The Director of Neighbourhood Delivery welcomed the positive comments and advised that a report titled ‘European Capital of Cycling 2024 Annual Update’ would be considered by the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee at their 11 February 2025 meeting. He said this comprehensive report would include consideration of legacy and future opportunities to build on this work.

The Strategic Director, Growth & Development said that the Council and other relevant partners did work with local schools and colleges to promote green skills and jobs to address the existing skills gap. She referred Members to the Council’s Work and Skills Strategy 2022-27 that discussed this in further detail. The Chair commented that the Economy and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee regularly considered this important area of activity.

The Strategic Lead – Resources & Programmes said that there was regular communication with residents on the issue of climate change, including the use of social media. He said that an officer from the Communications Team was co-located with the Zero Carbon Team so that they were alive to the activities and campaigns. He said that the Committee received an annual report on this specific activity. The Executive Member for Clean Air, Environment and Transport added that she was currently in discussions with the Deputy Chief Executive to explore all opportunities to engage with residents and she would welcome any suggestions from the Members.

The Zero Carbon Manager said that Manchester City Council had been successful in an application to the EU Net Zero Cities Programme and had been twinned with Stockholm to share learnings of governance, health inequalities and impacts of climate change. She said that Stockholm were very interested in learning about the relationship between the Council and the Manchester Climate Change Partnership. She said this project was in its early days and a report on this work would be provide to the Committee at the appropriate time.

In response to a Member's suggestion the Chair said that future update reports should include 'deep dives' on particular areas of activity that were of interest to the Committee. The Chair said that she would discuss this with the Executive Member for Clean Air, Environment and Transport at the appropriate time.

Decision

To note the report.

ECCNSC/25/04 2025-30 Manchester City Council Climate Change Action Progress Report

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive that provided an update on the development of the next Manchester City Council Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) for the period 2025-30.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- A Manchester City Council CCAP for the period 2025-30 was in development, led by the Council's Zero Carbon Team within City Policy engaging with colleagues across all Council Directorates;
- Consideration of national, regional and local policy and funding context;
- The CCAP 2025-30 would include Council actions addressing two key areas, Zero Carbon Council and Zero Carbon City;
- Consideration of the draft actions, noting that the actions across the CCAP were being developed with Action Owners to be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timebound); and
- The approval process and timeline for the 2025-30 CCAP.

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

- Fully endorsing the report and the planned activity described;
- What were the lessons learned from the 2020-25 CCAP that would inform and strengthen the 2025-30 CCAP;
- Welcoming the inclusion of the Zero Carbon Finance & Investment Sub Group, chaired by the City Treasurer as part of the governance structure;
- Had consideration been given to convening a citizens assembly on the subject of climate change; and
- What work was being done to influence other public sector organisations, such as Health Services and Schools (particularly in relation to buildings and people) to develop and adopt similar plans to address their own carbon emissions.

The Strategic Director, Growth & Development stated that the issue of governance across this work was recognised as very important across all Directorates, noting that whilst the Deputy Chief Executive was the Senior Responsible Officer for the CCAP, all Directors had taken responsibility for their relevant work stream and that they communicated regularly on this activity. She commented that the next CCAP would have a greater emphasis on climate adaptation and resilience.

The Deputy Chief Executive stated that the challenge to remain within the Council's carbon budget and meet the 2038 target was fully acknowledged and understood. He said that the report demonstrated how seriously the organisation took this challenge and the planning and work that was being developed to continue the work to remain within the allocated carbon budget. He said that the foundations to progress this work, including sound and robust governance arrangements had been established in the first five year plan. He said that appropriate consideration would be given to ensure the new plan was deliverable and affordable. He said that the relationship with Greater Manchester Combined Authority and the Manchester Climate Change Agency/ Partnership remained very important so as to speak as one voice to drive change and utilise all levers for change. He also spoke to the importance of wider behaviour change and the importance of effective and meaningful communication on the issue of climate change with residents; the importance of working with education settings the positive relationship the Director of Education had with all schools across the city. He also referred to the examples of Neighbourhood Teams' involvement with young people on the topic of climate change.

The Chair commented that the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee had recently considered a report that discussed education and climate change and requested that the Scrutiny Support Officer circulate this report to the Members of the Committee for information.

In response to a question raised in relation to the decarbonisation of transport and the airport, the Chair advised that a substantive report on the issue of aviation and emissions would be considered at the next meeting of the Committee.

The Executive Member for Clean Air, Environment and Transport said that engagement with residents was an ongoing process. She said that there already existed many active resident and community groups that focused on climate change and she would give consideration as to how best galvanise and bring together these existing groups. She said that she was happy to continue this discussion with the Members outside of the meeting to progress.

The Director, Manchester Climate Change Agency said that Manchester had displayed very strong governance arrangements and practice in the delivery of the CCAP to date. She said this enabled the Council to demonstrate best practice and influence other organisations to take positive and meaningful action to address their own emissions. She made reference to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, designed to provide grants for public sector bodies to fund heat decarbonisation and energy efficiency measures. She said that schools faced a challenge due to inconsistent funding arrangements and challenges relating to capacity and resources in individual schools.

In response to a list of suggestions raised by a Member, the Executive Member for Clean Air, Environment and Transport suggested that he forward them to her directly via email for consideration.

Decision

To note the report.

ECCNSC/25/05 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 Manchester City Council Climate Change Action Plan Q2 emissions report was appended for information.

Decision

The Committee notes the report and agrees the work programme.