

Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2018

Present:

Councillor Hacking - In the Chair

Councillors Andrews, Cooley, M Dar, Evans, Fletcher-Hackwood, Kirkpatrick, Rawlins and Rawson

Councillor N Murphy, Deputy Leader

Pasha Shah, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

Jawad Amin, Khizra Mosque

Paul Edwards, Moston Meadows Residents Association

CEESC/18/29 Minutes

Councillor Andrews expressed an interest in joining the Our Manchester Voluntary and Community Sector Fund Task and Finish Group, which had been established at the 21 June meeting. The Chair of the Task and Finish Group reported that there was a vacancy on the Group for a Member of the Resources and Governance Scrutiny (RAGS) Committee, of which Councillor Andrews was also a Member. Councillor Andrews informed Members that he would discuss this with the Chair of the RAGS Committee.

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2018 as a correct record.

CEESC/18/30 Integration and Community Cohesion - Integrated Communities

The Committee received a report of the Chief Operating Officer (Neighbourhoods) which provided information about the seven key areas of the Integrated Communities green paper, how this work fitted into Manchester's local framework for strengthening community cohesion and an update on the work taking place in North Manchester on community cohesion. The report also provided an update on the revised publication date for the Greater Manchester Commission for Tackling Hateful Extremism and Promoting Social Cohesion report.

Officers referred to the main points and themes within the report, which included:

- Information on the national Integrated Communities green paper and the seven key themes to challenge segregation and promote integration;
- Information on Manchester's Framework for Delivering Community Cohesion;
- Information on the North Manchester Community Cohesion Pilot; and
- An update on the Greater Manchester Commission to Tackle Hateful Extremism and Promote Social Cohesion.

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

- Welcoming the good work undertaken to bring communities together and strengthen community cohesion;
- That the green paper did not address the impact that cuts to local authorities' funding had on their ability to deliver public services;
- The impact of a reduction in public services in creating unhealthy competition for resources and the detrimental impact this had on community cohesion;
- The need to respond effectively to any groups coming into the city intent on spreading division and hatred;
- To request information on the number of children being home schooled in Manchester and what measures were being taken to protect them from extremism;
- Funding for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses;
- What additional support was to be offered to schools to deliver the requirement to promote British values; and
- What the implications of the green paper were for schools admissions policies.

Pasha Shah from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government informed Members that an analysis of the national consultation on the Integrated Communities green paper was currently ongoing and the findings of this would be published in due course. He reported that five areas had been identified as pilot areas, Blackburn and Darwen; Peterborough; Bradford; Walsall and Waltham Forest. He said that £7m funding had been made available for groups to apply to support this activity with the long-term intention of building sustainable local communities which were supported to make local decisions and formulate local responses to address issues.

Mr Shah said that the green paper recognised English language as a priority and that in the pilot areas local communities would be encouraged to develop local, creative solutions to meet demand. He advised that the responses to the consultation would inform what support would be offered to schools to promote British values. He said this would be further enhanced by schools adopting an admissions policy to ensure that children from a variety of communities were admitted to schools to address community separation and isolation that was experienced in some areas. He reported that further information on these areas of policy would be better addressed by the Department for Education following analysis of the consultation. The Chair said that he would discuss with the Chair of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee which Committee would scrutinise the implications of the green paper on admissions policies.

The Director of Neighbourhoods informed Members that links had been established with the pilot scheme areas and the experience and lessons learnt would be shared with Manchester.

Mr Edwards described the initiatives undertaken in Moston to support community cohesion, these included establishing monthly meetings with representatives of different community and faith groups to establish a positive dialogue and build relationships; the extension of the residents association to cover a new build multi-cultural area and support for a local multi-cultural theatre group. He further described the invaluable support that the residents had received from the Neighbourhood Team and local Councillors.

Mr Amin described the positive work undertaken at the mosque and that they engaged with all sections of the community. He gave an example of a recent Health Fair event that had been supported by a range of partners and was attended by all sections of the community. He said that the mosque also served as a Hate Crime Third Party Reporting Centre. He said that PCSOs attended a regular Friday drop in event at the mosque that helped build confidence in the community and build relationships between the local community and partners. He commented that the positive citywide response to the arena bomb was a testament to the work that had been undertaken in Manchester to bring communities together.

Decisions

1. To note the report and thank the guests for their contribution.
2. To request that information on the number of children being home schooled in Manchester and what measures are being taken to protect them from extremism be circulated to Members.
3. To note that the Chair will discuss with the Chair of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee which Committee should scrutinise the implications of the green paper on admissions policies.

CESC/18/31 Manchester Adult English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Strategy - update

The Committee received a report of the Manchester Adult Education Service (MAES) Head of Service that provided an update of the current position with regard to the ESOL Strategy and the position of ESOL in the city.

Officers referred to the main points and themes within the report, which included:

- Providing Members with a background to the development of the Adult ESOL strategy for Manchester;
- An update on progress on the strategy;
- Information on the national picture including the All Party Parliamentary Group on Social Integration; and
- Information on the Government's Integrated Communities Strategy green paper that was published in March 2018.

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

- What were employers doing to deliver ESOL for their employees;
- Were those residents affected by the closure of learning centres able to access other learning centres and where could details of these centres be found;
- Was the delivery of ESOL courses flexible to reflect the nature of people's working patterns ;
- Could the service meet demand and what were the future funding arrangements; and
- What would the impact of Brexit be on the level of demand for ESOL.

The Head of Work and Skills reported that evidence suggested that employers did not commission ESOL courses for their employees. She informed Members that the Adult Education Budget would be devolved to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) in 2019. She advised that, whilst work on the devolved budget was still ongoing, she was confident that the delivery of ESOL would continue as the provision of ESOL courses fitted in with the GMCA's objectives around work and skills.

The Adult Education Manager reported that it was recognised that learners could often work unconventional hours. She informed the Committee that both the Manchester College and MAES delivered courses in a flexible way with learners able to catch up on any missed classes at home and some courses were being piloted where learners could study online with the support of tutors and regular tutorials. She informed the Committee that information on where Talk English groups met could be obtained from the Talk English website, and she would circulate the link to Members. With regard to the question on Brexit, she said that the number of European workers accessing ESOL was very low and the demand for these courses arose from other community groups. She offered to share a profile of the learners with Members.

The Deputy Leader reported that the provision of ESOL was very important and the intention was to deliver more ESOL courses in Manchester, not less.

Decision

To note the report.

CESC/18/32 Delivering the Our Manchester Strategy

The Committee received a report of the Deputy Leader which provided an overview of the work undertaken and progress towards the delivery of the Council's priorities as set out in the Our Manchester Strategy for those areas within the portfolio of the Deputy Leader.

The Deputy Leader referred to the main points and themes within the report, which included activities in relation to:

- Tackling crime and antisocial behaviour;
- Keeping children, young people and adults with vulnerabilities safe;
- Protecting people from serious harm;
- Reducing the crime impact caused by alcohol and drugs;
- Changing and preventing adult offender behaviour;
- Skills and Employment; and
- Employer Engagement.

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

- The need to recognise that older people require training, upskilling and the offer of apprenticeships;

- That the experience of residents and businesses when trying to contact Greater Manchester Police (GMP) via the 101 number was unsatisfactory; and
- Following recent national news reports, an assurance was sought that GMP would respond appropriately to reports of hate crime.

The Deputy Leader acknowledged the comments made regarding the experience of residents when calling the 101 number. He informed Members that conversations were ongoing with the Chief Constable and the Police and Crime Commissioner to discuss options to improve this. He advised Members that Manchester residents were encouraged to report hate crimes and he would be seeking an assurance from GMP that they were responding appropriately. He stated that he would update Members following his discussions with GMP.

The Deputy Leader acknowledged the comments made regarding the need for older people to be able to access training and apprenticeships. He said that he recognised that people needed to receive ongoing training to reflect the changing nature of employment so that people's skill sets remained relevant.

Decision

To note the report.

CESC/18/33 Overview Report

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

The Chair informed Members that the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime had been invited to attend a future meeting and it was hoped that she would be able to attend the Committee's September meeting. A Member requested that the report on Community Asset Transfers be included on the Committee's October agenda, to which the Chair agreed.

Decision

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