

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee –
3 December 2019

Subject: The Council's approach to Consultation

Report of: Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer

Summary

This report provides Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee with an overview of the Council's approach to consultation with Manchester residents, and next steps for taking this forward.

Recommendations

That Committee note and comment on the proposed next steps.

Wards Affected: All

Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city

The approach to consultation covers activities that underpin all aspects of the ambitions for Manchester, including the delivery of the zero carbon target for the city.

Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	The approach to consultation covers activities that underpin all aspects of the Our Manchester Strategy outcomes
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	The approach to consultation covers activities that underpin all aspects of the Our Manchester Strategy outcomes
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	The approach to consultation covers activities that underpin all aspects of the Our Manchester Strategy outcomes
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	The approach to consultation covers activities that underpin all aspects of the Our Manchester Strategy outcomes

A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	The approach to consultation covers activities that underpin all aspects of the Our Manchester Strategy outcomes
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Contact Officers:

Name: Carol Culley
Position: Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer
Telephone: 0161 234 3406
E-mail: carol.culley@manchester.gov.uk

Name: James Binks
Position: Director of Policy, Performance and Reform
Telephone: 0161 234 1146
E-mail: j.binks@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Jennifer Green
Position: Director of Strategic Communications
Telephone: 0161 234 4420
E-mail: j.green1@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Dawn Billups
Position: Senior Researcher
Telephone: 0161 234 3972
E-mail: d.billups@manchester.gov.uk

1. Introduction

1.1 This paper sets out Manchester City Council's current approach to consultation. There is an array of ways in which the Council seeks the views of our residents, businesses, organisations and voluntary sector and involve them in the decision making processes. This paper sets out the following:

- The Council's current approach to consultations
- Support from the Corporate Core
 - Communications
 - Legal Services
 - Performance, Research and Intelligence
- Recent examples of consultations
 - Example 1 - The Budget
 - Example 2 - Our Manchester Strategy
 - Example 3 - Manchester's Industrial Strategy
 - Example 4 - Manchester's Local Plan
 - Example 5 - The Clean Air Plan
 - Example 6 - City Centre Transport Strategy
 - Example 7 - Council Tax Support Scheme
 - Example 8 - The Christmas Campaign 2019
- Consultations within other Greater Manchester Authorities
- Next Steps
 - The Co-production and Consultation Group
 - The Campaign Engagement Framework

1.2 The paper then makes some suggestions about how the approach could be improved and next steps.

2. The Council's current approach to consultations

2.1 Each year the Council undertakes many statutory and non-statutory consultations where we ask our residents, businesses, key stakeholders, and voluntary and community organisations their views on a wide range of subjects. This work is usually undertaken by a working group which consists of:

- A lead officer - from the service who is leading the consultation on behalf of the directorate,
- A researcher - colleague/s in the Performance, Research and Intelligence Team (PRI) who work to establish the correct method to use to consult and how the responses will be analysed and presented,
- A communications officer - who leads on how the consultation will be publicised and the channels that can be used to spread the word and boost response rates
- A legal officer (statutory consultations only) - who will provide legal advice on process and legal requirements.

2.2 Consultations within the council take many forms and the approach to each one is undertaken differently depending on a range of factors including, proposals to be consulted on and the impact of the changes, the budget allocated to undertake the consultation and time restrictions. The group supporting a consultation will adapt to the needs of the individual consultation. For example, responses are monitored once the consultation has gone live and where there is potential under representation by demographic group or within a geographical area, then the group will look to boost responses by targeting the under-represented areas specifically.

3. Support from the Corporate Core

Communications

3.1 Corporate Communications supports services in a variety of ways with their consultations. It could be as simple as supporting online versions or as in the case with the budget consultation designing a communications approach, with Legal Services and PRI, that supports significant engagement internally and externally with the budget process and consultation questions. Consultation support from Communications can include:

- Design and creative concepts
- Web options
- Online and offline media channels
- Print and mail
- Media Strategy.

3.2 Not all options are required for all consultations. This may include insight to understand the targeted audience, so that there is clarity about which channels people use and how they are most likely to engage. For some consultations it could be that Communications will help tailor words, questions and background information to the needs and preferences of particular groups such as older people, younger people, or people with disabilities.

3.3 Alongside this, the team will support content generation to drive people to the consultation. This will be content that people may be more likely to engage with, such as video or images in social media. In addition, the service will support with producing materials, such as letters, leaflets and other print options as required. Communications will also measure, evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of these communication activities and feed that learning back into future.

Legal Services

3.4 Legal Services provide advice about whether a consultation is necessary, and the length and form of consultation, particularly in relation to statutory consultations. The service will advise and ensure that the consultation is lawful and that it follows the correct process.

Performance, Research and Intelligence

- 3.5 The Performance, Research and Intelligence (PRI) team works with Directorates to advise on the most appropriate approach to effectively consult. This can take many forms including: online questionnaires, focus groups etc. PRI works with colleagues to ensure the questions asked are unbiased nor leading and the responses will be useful to the decision making process.
- 3.6 PRI then lead on the collection of the responses (if undertaken online) and facilitate the process of colleagues having access to response rates. Where response rates are low or certain groups/geographies are under-represented, PRI and Corporate Communications work with colleagues to boost responses. This could come in the form of a targeted communications approach or holding an event in an underrepresented area to publicise the consultation and improve response rates.
- 3.7 In terms of reporting the results of consultations, officers in PRI work with colleagues on providing analysis of all responses in a relevant format which is meaningful to the audience. This analysis is then fed into relevant papers which then informs the decision making process.

4. Recent examples of consultations

- 4.1 The following are examples of different consultations that MCC have undertaken or are up and coming consultations. Details are provided on:
- i. the approach to the consultation,
 - ii. issues and challenges that were raised and;
 - iii. what is being done to improve the way forward

Other examples are not included in the scope of this paper as they have been recently considered by other Scrutiny Committees, for example Neighbourhoods Scrutiny have recently looked at the approach to consultation in Highways.

Example 1 - The Budget

(i) The approach

- 4.2 To maximise opportunities for engagement throughout the budget setting process a three stage approach was carried out in 2016/17 for the three-year budget.
- 4.3 The first phase – Our Budget Conversation - was conversational and more informal: encouraging conversations to take place across a number of channels, that people want to use, rather than on a particular set of questions. The eight-week budget conversation provided a clear understanding about what services and places are valuable to Manchester people. Many people also gave their views about what they and their communities could do to support and improve their city. Over 2,000 people responded to the

questionnaire, on line or postal paper copies, with thousands more sharing their views through social media and at local events. The outcome of the budget conversation was reported to Council Officers and to the Executive and Scrutiny Committees, and was taken into account by Officers when developing budget options.

- 4.4 The second phase asked people for their opinions on the wide range of budget options developed by officers. This approach was designed to provide a clear understanding of the views from all stakeholders on which of the options should be developed into budget proposals. The Executive's draft budget proposals were informed by responses to these first two phases of consultation, including comments and feedback from each of the six Scrutiny Committees.
- 4.5 The final phase shared the detail of the Executive's draft proposed budget, outlining the views captured during the second phase and detailing how the options were considered and developed into the proposed draft budget and offered people the opportunity to share their views for the final time.
- 4.6 This three stage approach was welcomed and more people got involved with the budget consultation than ever before. For 2020/21 the budget will be a one year roll over budget with limited change but the next budget consultation engagement is planned for the start of the next new Medium Term Financial Plan.

Example 2 - Our Manchester Strategy 2016 - 2025

(i) The approach

- 4.7 The opportunity to use a new engagement approach to inform the development of the city's new 10-year strategy was realised. As such, a 12-week consultation process was undertaken between August - October 2015 to ask residents and businesses what their dream Manchester would look like. The consultation activity was undertaken in a number of different ways to try and ensure maximum engagement across the city, including:
- Several engagement events - held by partners across the city and in libraries
 - MyDreamMcr.co.uk website - invited people to briefly tell us what their vision was for Manchester in 2025. Information on where people could go to give more detailed responses was available.
 - Twitter - use of #MyDreamMcr hashtag promoted by the Council and partners; use of open and informal questions to generate informal discussions. Also held Twitter Q&A with the Leader.
 - Facebook - posted messages through the Council's Facebook page, alongside targeted methods to encourage traffic to visit MyDreamMcr.co.uk website.
 - Longer online questionnaires - used to gather more detailed written responses from partners, businesses and residents.

- Offline materials - created A3 posters and postcards, which were displayed in public and partners' buildings to promote the consultation and capture feedback
- Screens - use of some prominent public advertising screens in the city to publicise the consultation.

At the time of its closing, it received the highest reach and response rate of any Council consultation to date.

(ii) **Issues and challenges**

4.8 This consultation was a new approach for the Council. Whilst successfully creating a greater qualitative evidence base to develop the Strategy from, significant resource and time was required to undertake the consultation. Analysing the consultation feedback in its various forms also required greater resource and time.

(iii) **What is being done about it to improve the approach?**

4.9 Following the success of this approach in creating the Our Manchester 2016 - 2025 Strategy, the Our Manchester approach is now considered within all strategy development. The Council recognises the importance of using engagement to inform a strategy's development, not just consulting on the final product.

4.10 The use of social media allowed for a greater reach (the number of people that see a message on social media). Reach is broadened when people like, share or comment on messages. Using targeted Facebook advertising here significantly boosted the campaign's visibility to the Manchester audience. However, the algorithms in social media platforms have changed since this consultation. For example, Facebook's aim is to keep people in their platform and not encourage people to go to another site for more information or to capture information. This, along with the 'value' given to organic posts from organisations will make it harder to engage people in a consultation in the same way, without spending money to advertise or native content within the site itself.

Example 3 - Developing a more inclusive economy - Our Manchester Industrial Strategy

(i) **The approach**

4.11 In line with the Our Manchester approach, a wide ranging engagement exercise was undertaken in autumn 2018 to develop a qualitative evidence base to inform the development of Developing a More Inclusive Economy - Our Manchester Industrial Strategy (alongside quantitative data and a literature review).

4.12 Different engagement methods were used for different cohorts across all of the city's neighbourhoods to ensure optimal engagement. Using the Our

Manchester approach, any questions were deliberately open-ended to allow for a conversation between the interviewer and interviewee, which was recorded. Examples of how these methods were tailored to different cohorts included:

- Businesses and organisations - the Work and Skills team undertook a large number of targeted in person conversations with employers. An online questionnaire specifically tailored to businesses and organisations was also promoted, including via LinkedIn.
- Resident engagement - face-to-face conversations were undertaken in every ward in strategic locations and at community assets. This included a focus on 50+ residents and university students.
- Workshops with young people - workshops were run with schools and at a Youth Council event to ask young people their views on Manchester's labour market.
- Online survey - promoted via social media to get a more universal response.
- Presented at governance and partnerships boards.

The conversations were then coded to extract the qualitative data, with the key themes forming the basis of the Strategy.

- 4.13 More information on the methodology and findings from this engagement was presented to Economy Scrutiny Committee on 18 July (see Appendix 2 - Methodology and Findings):

<https://democracy.manchester.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=136&MIId=130&Ver=4>

(ii) **Issues and challenges**

- 4.14 Again, significant resource and time was required to implement the engagement activity and its subsequent analysis. The desire to engage with a broad audience meant that the timetable for engagement was extended to include those who said they could not partake within the given timescales; this did lead to a greater range of views being captured but did shorten the amount of time for writing the final Strategy. As a number of teams from across the Council and several partners were involved in undertaking and promoting the consultation, it was occasionally difficult to ensure that all engagement had the same messaging as to why we were undertaking the activity.

(iii) **What is being done about it to improve the approach?**

- 4.15 Knowledge learnt from this approach is being used to inform future consultations. For example, the forthcoming Local Plan consultation will consider using a workshop exercise when engaging with schools.

Example 4 - Manchester's Local Plan

(i) The approach

4.16 Consulting on the Local Plan is guided by the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) which was adopted in 2018. The planning legislation dictates to a degree the process in terms of timescales that needs to be undertaken at each stage of consultation for the Local Plan. The methods of consultation are however very much in the gift of each local authority. At the early stages of consultation (Issues) the Council has looked to deploy various methods of engagement to raise awareness and encourage participation/ response to the consultation. The forthcoming consultation on the issues for the new Manchester Local Plan is intended to feature the following methods of consultation:

- Working with colleagues to apply methods deployed in the recent consultation on the Local Industrial Strategy including working with local schools;
- Working alongside colleagues undertaking current/forthcoming consultations (e.g. City Centre Transport Strategy/ Clean Air Plan);
- Notification of the consultation to our Local Plan consultee database (via Objective);
- Production of a summary leaflet to cover the key issues and signpost to the main Issues Consultation document;
- Social media campaign to raise awareness (worked up with colleagues in Communications and PPR);
- Linking into existing meetings within neighbourhood teams;
- Picking up key messages already communicated by the business community through the consultation on the LIS; and
- Considering sector specific consultation events through linking to other consultations (e.g. City Centre Transport Strategy, Clean Air Plan)

(ii) Issues and challenges

4.17 The earlier stages of consultation for the Local Plan are seen as an important stage to ensure organisations and individuals understand the scope and purpose of the plan. It is also important that there is a real opportunity to influence the content of the plan. Conversely, at this early stage there tends to be relatively little detail in terms of firm proposals and policies, which is often the stage when comments are more likely to occur (simply because the plan at that point will show more tangible information in terms of site allocations for example).

4.18 Another key challenge is the coordination of consultations across a range of related strategies and plans. In the current timeline over the next few months there will be consultations on the City Centre Transport Strategy and the Clean Air Plan (GM wide) that have a direct correlation with parts of the Local Plan. There is a need for a careful approach to how these various consultations take place to avoid consultation fatigue and to deliver a joined up timetable on consultation events where appropriate.

(iii) **What is being done about it to improve the approach?**

- 4.19 As noted in the approach the plan for consultation on the issues stage of the Local Plan is cognisant of other consultations and will link into those consultations where feasible/appropriate. We are also looking to replicate aspects of the Our Manchester Industrial Strategy consultation, and in particular the work with schools that was undertaken for the Our Manchester Industrial Strategy.

Example 5 - The Clean Air Plan

(i) **The approach**

- 4.20 This consultation was a Greater Manchester wide consultation which sought the views of the public on how to tackle air pollution across the conurbation. The first stage involved raising awareness of the issues and part seeking views on outline proposals. An informal conversation took place over the summer of 2019 where MCC used a multi way approach to gather the views of residents. A wide range of media channels were used to publicise the conversations we were having and drop in sessions were held to gather residents' thoughts, often to coincide with existing community events.

- 4.21 These venues were chosen due to the high footfalls. Social media and advertising on billboards and bus backs were used to raise awareness and specific events were targeted at specific audiences such as taxi drivers and van owners. Overall this first stage of informal consultation led to 3,300 responses being received with the largest volume from Manchester residents. This early informal stage is due to be followed up by a formal consultation early next year. The second phase is more prescribed by regulation so there will be key legal tests to pass and advice has been sought from The Consultation Institute on process.

(ii) **Issues and challenges**

- 4.22 Key issues to date have included how to increase response rates. Messaging needs to be tested and adjusted accordingly. It's important to be flexible and if something isn't working to be prepared to change it.

Example 6 - City Centre Transport Strategy

(i) **The approach**

- 4.23 This is a current consultation which is going to be a three stage process. The first stage was a conversation where over 6000 people gave their views on city centre transport issues. This feedback was via an online questionnaire. The outline went to scrutiny and we held member briefings both when the consultation went live and after we had received the results.
- 4.24 The second phase, due to start imminently is an " engagement and co design" exercise. This is using outside consultants to run some workshops and to have some more in depth conversations with specific stakeholder groups.

- 4.25 The third stage will be a more conventional consultation on a draft strategy. Again though we are keen to look at possible innovative techniques to increase the level of engagement.

Example 7 - Council Tax Support Scheme

(i) The approach

- 4.28 To ensure that the consultation reached as many benefit claimants and Manchester residents as possible, a wide-ranging consultation and engagement plan was developed. The approach was both digital and offline, ensuring that those most impacted by the proposals had the opportunity to respond. This was developed with the evaluation results of previous consultation exercises in mind. A comprehensive consultation narrative, explaining the scheme and why it had been proposed and the impact on benefit claimants was used as the basis of both content for the Council website and a paper questionnaire. 1,310 paper questionnaires were also distributed.
- 4.29 The paper questionnaires were sent to Libraries, the Customer Service Centre and to Members. Advice groups in the city and registered providers were also contacted. Historically, the greatest response to a Council Tax Support Scheme (CTS) consultation was a direct mail out with a paper questionnaire. With that in mind, a letter with the overarching narrative, options and questionnaire with a freepost return envelope was sent directly to a selection of 30,000 of the working age CTS caseload - 5,911 Universal Credit households currently claiming CTS (directly affected by the Scheme change) as well as a random sample of 9,089 households currently claiming CTS (excluding pensioners and UC claimants currently claiming CTS) plus 15,000 Council Tax payers.
- 4.30 A total of 1,051 questionnaires were completed, this includes 809 paper questionnaires and 242 online questionnaires. Of this total, 567 were from people in receipt of CTS and 365 of them are Manchester residents.

(ii) Issues and challenges

- 4.31 Of the 1,051 respondents, the response rate from all districts of Manchester where residency was declared (700 respondents), in comparison with the 2016 mid-year estimate Manchester population figures, reveal that the City Centre and Central are overrepresented and the North and East and South and Wythenshawe were slightly underrepresented. In the age groups the headlines were that the 16-25 category are very underrepresented, the 40-49s are overrepresented and there is an even greater overrepresentation with the 50-64s. As with all consultations, response rates ideally would have been higher.

(iii) What is being done about it to improve the approach?

- 4.32 The approach to this consultation was welcomed and the forthcoming CTS consultation will follow the same approach.

Example 8 - The Christmas Campaign 2019

- 4.33 The Christmas campaign for 2019 is well underway supporting the full Christmas offer in the city. A full evaluation will be completed in the New Year, once complete the findings will be brought back to scrutiny. The evaluation results have been added to the forward work plan.

Consultations within other Greater Manchester Authorities

- 4.34 Colleagues in PRI sit on the Greater Manchester Consultation Network. This group consists of representatives from the ten districts in the conurbation and others from further afield, mainly the North West and Cheshire. The aim of the group is to share best practice, discuss approaches to consultations, pool training resources, discuss developments in the field and consultations of each other's which we can complement/feed in to. Through this group it has become apparent that the approach to consultation differs between each local authority. Some local authorities have a lead consultation officer that coordinates and runs all consultations in their LA including the methodology, publicity and analysis. In other LAs a working group approach, similar to our approach, is used.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Whilst every effort has been put in to the consultations we have implemented, including the ones stated in the previous section, more can be done. This section outlines some of the next steps that are being taken to improve how the Council undertakes consultations and engagement.

Co-production and Consultation Group

- 5.2 A new officer Co-production and Consultation Group (CPCG) group was established in October 2019 with representatives from across the Council. The group will consider how to use co-production techniques where appropriate, and how to apply an Our Manchester approach to consultation and engagement activities.

The specific aims of the group include to:

- develop guidance / toolkits for how to consult effectively
- develop guidance / toolkits for how to undertake co-production methods effectively
- understand when is it appropriate to use a spectrum of methods from consultation to co-production and options in between, and how the workforce is supported to know what to use and when
- learn from previous experience of what has and hasn't worked well in Manchester, and in other areas

- build our workforce capacity and capability to work in this way as part of the Our Manchester engagement and workforce work
- understand how we engage and communicate consultations better, given the changes to social media platforms and taking into account how people wish to engage with the Council.

5.3 The group has met once to date, and will meet again in December to begin to develop principles and establish a programme of work streams.

5.4 The role of external partners and organisations in this group is being considered taking into account how their time can be best used in the design and shaping of any guidance and toolkits, and how their expertise can influence

The Campaigning Engagement Framework

5.5 There is a commitment to ensuring that our workforce have the skills to take an Our Manchester engagement approach to working with residents and communities which forms part of the programme for the new Campaigning Engagement Framework (CEF).

5.6 The CEF will support Our Manchester to feel more bottom-up and generated by our residents. It will also outline the development required to empower front line staff, who regularly work with residents, across a range of services, to take a more engaging approach.

5.7 There is some time-limited resource allocated to deliver a programme of work for the Campaigning Engagement Framework (CEF) which will include intensive work (at scale and pace) to:

- understand how, where, when and why we are engaging with residents and communities
- develop the frameworks, tools and skills development that underpin meaningful and high-quality engagement
- try out new models of engagement and practice, and influence their use in mainstream engagement
- support the coordination of engagement to reduce duplication and increase quality, trust and reputation of the organisation.

5.8 The CEF commits support to consultation and engagement with communities. In particular, it plans to ensure that there is a consistency of messaging about Our Manchester, what it is and what it means in communities. Taking a resident focused approach and not an organisational one. It also suggests that consistency (along with knowledge and confidence in coproduction and how do this well is required too.

As part of this work it is suggested that Co-production Framework or toolkit is produced so that staff know what to do when. Understanding when it is the right time to co-produce or consult formally or engage. This will include engagement development and training at two levels – practitioner and

specialist. Practitioner, for general engagement and supportive Our Manchester engagement; and specialist, for community capacity-building engagement.

- 5.9 In addition, updated guidance, training and tools that is aligned to Our Manchester to allow teams working in neighbourhoods, with residents and communities to best promote their local services, events and activities and to encourage more local people to get involved in local activity.
- 5.10 Finally the CEF suggests that activities take place at a local level that demonstrate that the Council is listening, and so this will also include effective and engaging consultation. This would lead to a “you said, WE (all of us) did” approach. Rather than “you said, we did”.
- 5.11 A paper with more detail on the CEF will be presented to Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee in January.