

Executive

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 6 May 2020

(This was a remote meeting with all persons present in the meeting being remote from each other)

Present: Councillor Leese (Chair)

Councillors: Akbar, Bridges, Craig, N Murphy, Ollerhead, Rahman, Stogia and Richards

Also present as Members of the Standing Consultative Panel:

Councillors: Leech, M Sharif Mahamed, Sheikh, Midgley, Ilyas, Taylor and S Judge

Exe/20/56 Tribute to former Councillor Sue Murphy

The Leader of the Council paid tribute to the important contribution Sue Murphy had made to the city and to the Council. Members and all those present observed a minute's silence in remembrance of Councillor Sue Murphy.

Exe/20/57 Minutes

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting on 25 March 2020.

Exe/20/58 COVID 19 - Update on Response Phase

[Cllr Leese declared a personal interest in a part of the update as Director of Manchester Airport Group]

A report of the Chief Executive provided a summary of the work undertaken in response to the COVID-19 virus pandemic in Manchester.

The areas of work outlined in the report included:

- Providing a summary of the development of COVID-19;
- Detailing the activity undertaken by the City Council, Manchester Health and Care Commissioning (MHCC) and the Manchester Local Care Organisation (MLCO) to establish the Community COVID-19 Testing Hub with Trafford partners;
- Describing the work of the Manchester and Trafford mutual aid hub that had been set up to distribute Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to front-line workers as quickly as possible;
- Information was provided on the governance arrangements to support the Council response, with reference to the Greater Manchester Resilience Forum (GMRF) which was to be represented at the Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG) and Emergency Committee;
- Information on workforce considerations;

- Detailing the various forms of support available to help residents, including but not restricted to welfare and benefit support, support for carers, Free School Meals, emergency food provision and the Hardship Fund;
- Direct support to businesses, including expansion of the Retail Discount and the availability of grants;
- An update on Adult Social Care and the work with Health Partners;
- Describing the work to assist residents experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping;
- An update on the response of a range of different council services;
- Describing the financial implications for the council of the virus pandemic and controls, noting that the work to identify the financial implications of the current COVID-19 crisis was ongoing and evolving, particularly as announcements were being made regarding lockdown and continuing social distancing; and
- An overview of post lockdown planning and preparations for the next phase.

The Leader stated that the pandemic was unprecedented and having a profound impact and he, on behalf of all Members paid tribute to the Chief Executive, the Senior Management Team, officers and all Public Sector workers for their invaluable and effective response to the difficult and challenging circumstances. He stated that he was in daily contact with the Chief Executive to monitor the emerging situation and that each Executive Member was in regular contact with the appropriate officers within the council's Senior Management Team. He further advised that he was contributing to the Greater Manchester Emergency Committee, chaired jointly by the Mayor of Greater Manchester and the Chief Constable of Greater Manchester Police (GMP). He told the meeting that he was in weekly contact with the Local Government Association to lobby central government over a range of issues, including the budgetary position.

With reference to the approval of a loan to support Manchester Airport, the Leader stated that due to the commercially sensitive nature of those arrangements it was not appropriate at that time to provide detailed information; however, he reassured the Members that the Deputy Leader, who had taken the decision, had consulted the Chief Executive, the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer and relevant Scrutiny Chair prior to the decision being taken and that all Members had been briefed on these arrangements.

The Leader then invited each individual Executive Member to provide an update on the work within their area of responsibility.

The Executive Member for Adult Health and Wellbeing paid tribute to all the staff who were working to provide services and support to the residents of Manchester, commenting that this would not be forgotten. She explained that over previous years the foundations had been established in Manchester to respond effectively to the situation by the integration of health and social care services and by establishing effective relationships. The planning of the response to the emerging COVID-19 threat had commenced in January 2020 and those plans had been reported to the Health Scrutiny Committee and Executive. She added that it was an emerging and changing landscape and that the figures presented within the published report were already out of date and she provided the meeting with updated figures in relation to the number of reported COVID-19 deaths.

In regard to hospital capacity the Executive Member for Adult Health and Wellbeing reported that Manchester was doing well and reiterated the message that residents were encouraged to seek medical assistance when required and not to delay or avoid seeking medical help for fear of COVID-19.

In regard to testing, the Executive Member for Adult Health and Wellbeing advised that on 20 March 2020 the City Council, Manchester Health and Care Commissioning and the Manchester Local Care Organisation had established the Community COVID-19 Testing Hub with Trafford partners to support the national programme and to implement a Manchester response, noting that testing sites were currently provided at the Airport, the Etihad Stadium and at Alexandra Park. The intention was to implement mobile testing sites across the city. She stated that the Community Testing Team were accessing Care Homes, commenting that this was very important and discussions were ongoing with the Care Quality Commission and Public Health England to continue to test care home residents. She stated that Manchester was using its local expertise and knowledge to support and inform testing at a Greater Manchester level.

With specific reference to Care Homes, the Executive Member for Adult Health and Wellbeing stated that Manchester remained committed to working with Care Homes to offer appropriate support and advice across a range of activities and services, noting that at the time of reporting two thirds of care homes in Manchester were not reporting cases of COVID-19. She advised that patients were being tested for COVID-19 prior to discharge from hospital to a care home. In response to a specific question, she confirmed that she had been given an assurance that anybody in a care home experiencing COVID-19 symptoms would receive the most appropriate treatment, where necessary including admission to hospital. The Executive Member for Adult Health and Wellbeing stated that all care home providers would be written to to advise them on the range of support via emergency funding that would be available to them.

With regard to PPE, the Executive Member stated that nationally there was an issue with procurement; however, Manchester had benefited from the establishment of a number of mutual aid hubs to deliver PPE to frontline staff across a range of settings, including staff working in care homes, homeless charities and GP Practices. She stated that this activity had been supported by local business and voluntary and community groups and she expressed her gratitude to all those involved.

The Executive Member for Adult Health and Wellbeing concluded by advising that the Manchester Local Care Organisation remained committed to delivering services to support vulnerable residents, including those identified as being in the shielded category. She stated the Freephone Helpline number was available to residents and advice was provided in a number of languages. She reported that the Helpline had received over 10,000 calls to date that had resulted in food being delivered to support more than 8,000 residents, with 6,000 of these identified as requiring ongoing support. She stated that this had been achieved by the efforts of the Voluntary and Community Sector and she paid tribute to the way in which they had responded and adapted to deliver this support.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods reported next, stating that he wished to place on record his thanks on behalf of all Members and residents to all staff and the Biffa crews that had worked in difficult circumstances to deliver the city's waste and recycling service with the minimum of disruption to residents. He advised that the bulky waste collection service had been reinstated and he thanked residents for their patience and understanding during this period. In response to a comment made regarding the necessity to keep all Members informed in an appropriate and timely manner of any changes to collections the Leader stated every endeavour would be made to inform Members in advance of any public announcements; however, it was important to acknowledge that circumstances changed quickly and this might not always be possible.

Problems nationally with flytipping had attracted a significant amount of press attention. The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods reported that Manchester had in fact experienced a reduction in the number of flytipping incidents, and where these had occurred contractors had been able to remove these in a timely manner.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods further paid tribute to all local faith leaders for the support offered to their local communities and congregations, noting the importance of spiritual support at such times whilst observing social distancing.

In his report the Deputy Leader paid tribute to Manchester residents in responding and adapting to the current difficult situation. He stated that whilst there had been a small number of cases of non-compliance, Manchester had been able to continue to keep parks and open spaces accessible for the benefit of the majority of Mancunians.

The Deputy Leader advised that where incidents and complaints had arisen officers from the Anti-Social Behaviour Action Team had worked closely with colleagues in GMP to address those. The policy that had been adopted was one of engage and explain, and in general that was being effective. He further welcomed the work undertaken to address speeding vehicles and off road motorcycles, which was another issue being seen across the whole country.

The Deputy Leader stated that it was acknowledged that the need to maintain social distancing would remain in place for some time and the Council was committed to supporting residents and businesses to adapt to this new way of life.

The Executive Member for Children and Schools paid tribute to all staff working in Children's and Education Services and the Senior Management Team for their response to the crisis, noting that they had demonstrated resilience and commitment. He further paid tribute to all staff working in schools and early learning settings for their response in providing home learning materials and delivering welfare checks, noting that he recognised how difficult lockdown could be for families and children, particularly those with additional needs. He thanked staff for protecting and supporting vulnerable people and stated that all this had emphasised the importance of the public sector and social care. He advised that all schools were receiving daily updates from the Director of Education and that the feedback from the schools to this contact and support was very welcome.

The Executive Member advised that ahead of the Government scheme to issue vouchers via schools to families who would usually be eligible for Free School Meals, Manchester City Council had made local arrangements to support Manchester families and he thanked the Director of Customer Services and Transactions and the work of the staff in the Revenues and Benefit Unit to deliver this support in a timely manner.

The Executive Member also informed Members that the Statutory Social Work service had continued to deliver the service in a 'business as usual' way and he continued to receive regular performance activity updates. He was reassured that all Looked After Children in Manchester continued to receive the appropriate support and regular contact from Social Workers using a range of different methods, adding that equipment has been provided to young people to enable digital and virtual contact.

Tribute was also paid to Foster Carers, recognising the important and invaluable role they provided in supporting young people. He advised that they were contacted weekly by the service to offer support and maintain contact.

The Executive Member for Children and Schools concluded by paying particular thanks to all young people across the city for adhering to the lockdown and he stated that it was recognised how challenging and difficult this was for them.

In response to a question regarding the reported decrease in the number of calls requesting assistance from Social Services, the Executive Member replied that this reflected national trends. He said that work was underway to reach out, contact and support people in need, such as those with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Council teams located in the Neighbourhood Hubs were being proactive in identifying and offering such support.

The Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources thanked all frontline staff and recognised the important work of all of the back office staff for supporting the response to this crisis, including those in the ICT and HR Departments for supporting staff as they interpreted and responded to the changing working environment and guidance. He noted that Manchester had already begun to prepare to respond to the emergency in advance of any Government announcements and made reference to the work of the Revenue and Benefit Unit to administer free school meals and financial support for businesses across the city. He advised the scale of this challenge could not be underestimated and he thanked the staff for their hard work to process the required changes and apply the grants and discounts appropriately, noting this equated to £66.865m support paid to local business. He further encouraged all local businesses to check what support they were entitled to that could help them through this challenging time and stated that information could be obtained via the Council's website.

In response to a specific question in relation to the numbers of fraudulent applications for grants, the Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources advised that he had sought an assurance from the Head of Audit and he was satisfied by the checks and due diligence taken by staff when processing applications. In regard to the one

specific incident regarding a double payment he reported that this was a genuine mistake and had been resolved quickly.

In regard to a question regarding Welfare Funding the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer stated that the use of the funding would continue to be reported.

Reporting next, the Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport thanked all staff for their work to support the residents of Manchester and wanted to take the opportunity to reassure residents that the work to tackle climate change was ongoing and remained a priority for the Council. In regard to the reporting of 2019/20 direct emissions she confirmed that this would complete the reporting against the Council's previous Climate Change Action Plan and would establish an accurate baseline by which to report progress against the new Climate Change Action Plan. The Council remained committed to ensuring that the Council's direct emissions reduced by 50% over the next five years and would continue to play a full part to support the city to achieve its carbon budget reduction ambitions.

The Executive Member reported that a mapping exercise was currently underway to explore future tree planting opportunities in 2020/21. At the appropriate time local communities and stakeholders would be invited to plant trees. In terms of reducing emissions, applications had been submitted to the Department of Transport to fund a fleet of e-cargo bikes and trailers to support greener courier services and submission had been made to the National Lottery Fund to seek funding to support local communities to deliver local environmental projects to address climate change and increase resilience. Furthermore, European Development Funding was being sought to progress work on the Hammerstone Road Depot and the installation of solar car ports at the Velodrome site. Dialogue had also commenced with the Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy with the aim of securing additional funding to support the delivery of the Climate Change Action Plan.

The Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration informed the Members that across Manchester there were approximately thirty Registered Housing Partners and as a result of existing joint work arrangements and relationships they had been in a strong position to respond at a community level when the virus pandemic crisis had emerged.

The Executive Member paid tribute to the positive response and 'can do' attitude of all the staff to support vulnerable residents. She made reference to the numerous initiatives undertaken by different providers to contact and support local residents. She thanked them all for their huge and important contribution that they played in supporting residents and she stated that they in turn would be supported in the difficult months ahead.

With regard to Manchester Move, the meeting was advised that this housing allocations system had been suspended during the lockdown period with priority being given to emergency allocations to ensure people requiring discharge from hospital or those fleeing domestic abuse could be housed quickly, appropriately and safely.

In his report to the meeting the Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure thanked the staff working in the Homelessness Team and across the wider Homelessness Partnership and the Voluntary and Community Sector for their invaluable work to support the most vulnerable residents in the city, often with complex needs, at such a challenging time.

The Executive Member advised that 255 people had been accommodated in hotels and other temporary accommodation and they continued to receive specialist support. He said that the ambition would now be to identify suitable permanent accommodation for these residents and this would be facilitated via individual support plans. He stated that this remained a challenge and the Government would continue to be lobbied to ensure appropriate funding was made available to Manchester to support this area of activity.

The Leader stated that despite the best efforts of officers, there remained a small number of rough sleepers who had refused all offers of accommodation; however, work with partners continued to offer support to these individuals and those individuals could still access support.

Decision

To note the report.

Exe/20/59 COVID 19 - Forward Recovery Planning

A report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer provided the Executive with an overview of forward planning work for the city's recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. This included preparations which were already underway to manage the phased opening up of the city and planning for the longer term challenges.

The report outlined proposals to reset and reposition the Our Manchester Strategy 2016 -2025 to respond to the post COVID-19 challenges the city now faced, starting with a consultation which was rooted in the Our Manchester approach.

The areas of work outlined in the report included:

- Economy – planning to support the economic recovery of the city, including support for businesses, supporting residents to develop skills and get back into employment, promoting residential and commercial development and transport planning;
- Residents and communities – including addressing poverty, supporting vulnerable residents, building community resilience and relationships, supporting the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector and understanding and addressing how the crisis was impacting on different groups; and
- Impact on the Council and Public Services – including Health and Social Care, Public Service Reform, changing ways of working and the financial impact of the crisis.

The report stated that this would be supported by:

- Evidence base and impact for each of the above workstreams;
- External relationships with a range of key partners; and
- The reset of the Our Manchester Strategy

The proposed terms of reference for the COVID-19 Recovery Coordination Group were appended to the report.

The Leader introduced the item, highlighting the challenges the city would face, in particular the predicted impact of the crisis on unemployment levels. He advised that an Executive Member would lead on each area of this work, alongside a senior responsible officer. He reported that it was important to both keep people safe and ensure that they felt safe.

The Deputy Leader advised Members that the world had changed significantly since the Our Manchester Strategy was developed in 2015 and that it needed to be reviewed to take into account the COVID-19 crisis, the impact of Brexit and the increasing priority being given to addressing climate change. He outlined the proposed approach and timeline for this review, involving consultation with stakeholders, with a revised strategy to be submitted to the Executive for approval in early 2021.

The Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration thanked staff in the Growth and Development service for their work. She emphasised the importance of building and development for the city's economic recovery and updated Members on housing building, particularly the building of affordable housing, including confirmation of £51 million in housing infrastructure funding for the Northern Gateway project and discussions with existing housing providers were ongoing to understand the challenges they were facing due to COVID-19. She informed Members that an update on the establishment of a housing delivery vehicle would be provided to the Executive's meeting in June 2020. She stated that the Council was committed to supporting and working with developers who shared its vision of safe, secure, quality, affordable housing and to getting the city building again.

The Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport reported that use of all forms of public transport had decreased dramatically since the start of the COVID-19 crisis and that car use had also reduced, although some key workers had switched from using public transport to driving to work due to concerns about transmission of COVID-19 on public transport. She informed Members that air quality had improved significantly due to fewer vehicles being on the road but that people who could not work from home needed to be able to travel to work safely. Enabling them to do so was a priority for the Council and its partners; looking closely at national guidance. She thanked transport workers, highways staff and Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) for their work. She advised Members that enabling people to walk safely while observing social distancing was also a priority, that a decision had already been taken to close part of Deansgate in the city centre to vehicles and that the Council was looking at what measures could be taken in local district centres, in consultation with Ward Councillors.

The Leader informed Members that colleagues in Public Health, Environmental Health and the Health Service were working together to develop proposals on contact tracing and mass testing, which would complement the work taking place at a national level.

The Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources informed Members that, since the Council's budget had been approved on 6 March 2020, the situation had changed drastically. He highlighted some of the financial challenges which were detailed in the report submitted to the Executive and expressed concern that the additional funding being provided by the national government would not cover the full impact of the COVID-19 crisis. He advised that, due to the economic uncertainty, escalating costs and loss of income arising from this crisis, the budget would need to be reviewed and a detailed report would be brought to the Executive's meeting in July 2020.

The Chief Executive thanked the Leader, Executive Members and Council staff for all their work, emphasising that this was still an ongoing effort to respond to the situation and plan for the future of the city. She highlighted the importance of considering what data could be put into the public domain, taking into account the rapidly changing nature of the situation.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer also added her thanks to those expressed earlier. She advised Members that the Council had received funding which would cover a lot of the additional costs incurred this year but that she was concerned about the impact of the crisis on the Council's income streams including business rates, council tax, dividends and commercial income and that this impact would be felt in the next financial year. She assured Members that significant work was taking place to address all the areas outlined in the report.

The Leader informed Members that the Leader of the Opposition was experiencing technical difficulties that were making his continued participation in the meeting difficult. The Leader therefore offered that any questions or comments he wished to make would be added to the public record. He informed Members that discussions would be taking place with the Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees about what form scrutiny would take during this period, recognising that the usual requirement for officers to produce several reports each month was not practical at present.

Decisions

1. To note the approach to the forward planning work and the establishment of the COVID-19 Recovery Coordination Group and its terms of reference.
2. To approve the preparatory work required to plan for a formal reset of the Our Manchester Strategy 2016-2025.
3. To note the work that is taking place through Greater Manchester, the UK Core Cities, and to influence the Government.
4. To receive monthly update reports on this work as a standing item, given the dynamic and rapidly changing nature of the situation.