

Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2020

Present:

Councillor Hacking - In the Chair

Councillors Chambers, Collins, M Dar, Evans, Grimshaw, Hitchen, Kirkpatrick and Rawson

Also present:

Councillor Akbar, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods

Councillor Craig, Executive Member for Adult Health and Wellbeing

Councillor Rahman, Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure

Mike Wild, Macc

Martin Preston, Macc

Apologies:

Councillors Douglas and Rawlins

CESC/20/15 Minutes

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2020 as a correct record.

CESC/20/16 Review of Advice Services in Manchester - Final Report and Recommendations

The Committee received a report of the Review of Advice Services in Manchester Task and Finish Group which presented the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the Review of Advice Services in Manchester Task and Finish Group. The Task and Finish Group had been established to consider the availability of advice services across the city, with a view to producing recommendations to be considered in the budget in the next financial year.

The Executive Member for Adult Health and Wellbeing thanked the Members of the Task and Finish Group and other stakeholders who had contributed to this work, advising that it had been a helpful process and that the recommendations were useful and achievable. She proposed that, if the Committee endorsed the recommendations in the report, she and relevant officers could bring a report to a future meeting which outlined their response to the recommendations. She informed Members of work which had already commenced in relation to the recommendations, including work to provide ward-level information on available advice services, work to provide additional training for frontline staff, including library staff, discussions taking place with Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and consideration of options for out of hours advice provision. She also informed the Committee about resources for and work to improve the provision of advice services in relation to homelessness and the prevention of homelessness and also for asylum seekers, refugees and people with no recourse to public funds.

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

- Request for more information on proposals for out of hours advice provision, noting that if telephone advice was to be made available through libraries, privacy was important;
- That RSLs should have a greater input, including a financial contribution, to the provision of advice services and a suggestion that RSLs could commission the Council to provide advice services, noting that the Executive Member for Adult Health and Wellbeing agreed to raise this through the Housing Providers Forum;
- The importance of having a pro-active approach to addressing debt, for example improving people's understanding of interest rates and raising awareness of issues relating to rent-to-own companies such as BrightHouse which charged high interest rates to low-income families;
- That this work should include consideration of the role RSLs could play in early intervention and that this could include a standard approach to providing support to tenants who were falling behind in their rent; and
- Concern that some tenants in overcrowded accommodation were de-prioritised for alternative accommodation because of their rent arrears and to ask that consideration be given to how households in this situation could be helped.

Decisions

1. To note the findings of the Task and Finish Group and endorse the recommendations as set out in the report.
2. To submit the recommendations to the Executive Member for Adult Health and Wellbeing and the recently-established multi agency Advice Forum for their consideration.
3. To request that the Committee receive a report in approximately six months' time which updates Members on actions being taken in response to the recommendations.
4. To request that the Executive Member for Adult Health and Wellbeing additionally consider the issues that Members have raised at this meeting and that a response to these also be included in the report.

CESC/20/17 Review of Council's Processes - Accessibility for Disabled People

The Committee received a report of the City Solicitor which set out the intended approach for a review of how the Council engaged with disabled residents, to act upon the Council's previously stated commitment to embed disability inclusion and accessibility considerations in the design and development of Manchester's capital and public realm projects.

The report stated that embedding effective processes for accessibility for disabled people would ensure that Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) would recognise that

climate change might have differential and unique impacts on disabled people's communities across the city, for example in terms of poor air quality, more frequent incidences of extreme weather and initiatives to reduce car journeys or the use of plastics.

The Chair outlined the context within which the report was requested, noting the desire to learn from and rectify the issues which had become apparent when an inaccessible design for the Peterloo Memorial was approved.

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

- Review of engagement mechanisms with disabled residents;
- Internal engagement;
- External research and engagement;
- Inclusive design round table;
- Outcomes and scope;
- Proposed timescales; and
- Communication.

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

- To welcome this review and to recognise the contribution of the Lead Member for Disability in this work;
- That the timescale for this work seemed long and what were the reasons for this;
- How the Council would ensure that partners, such as companies contracted to undertake building work, aligned with the Council's policies;
- Whether some of the work taking place in Manchester could in future be expanded across Greater Manchester; and
- Concern that there was a shortage of accessible housing for disabled people and to ask what data was available on future need and what could be done to plan for this.

The Director of Policy, Performance and Reform reported that the timescales had been set to allow time for a good consultation with a range of people and to engage with different areas of the Council, as well as to allow for other work that the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team was involved in; however, he advised that the team was not waiting until the review was finished to start making improvements to processes.

The Director of Policy, Performance and Reform reported that the Council used its Ethical Procurement Policy to require contractors to comply with its standards and that the Council was in discussion with other partners about this approach including discussions with Greater Manchester partners on adopting a consistent approach to ethical procurement.

The Equalities Specialist advised Members that she would discuss the issue of accessible housing with colleagues in the housing service as part of the review.

In response to a Member's question, the Equalities Specialist informed Members that the Our Manchester Disability Plan Board and its Access Subgroup would be involved in the review. The Chair encouraged both Members and officers to consider, and to ask other stakeholders, whether there was anyone else who should be involved in this review.

Decision

To request that the Committee receive a further report after the Inclusive Design Round Table meeting in October 2020.

CESC/20/18 Equality Objectives 2020 - 2024

The Committee received a report of the City Solicitor which set out the Council's proposed equality objectives for the period 2020 - 2024. It outlined the approach that the Council had taken to setting these in the past and described the process that had been undertaken to ensure that the most recent set of objectives represented the priorities of Manchester residents and other stakeholders, as well as those of the Council. The report set out the objectives in draft form and provided an opportunity for the Committee to comment on these to influence further refinement of them before they were published by no later than 6 April 2020.

The report noted that, whilst the process of setting equality objectives did not directly demonstrate an impact on the achievement of the Council's zero-carbon target, the refresh of the draft objectives did take the opportunity to commit to more fully understanding the interaction of equality issues and environmental issues. It stated that the Council would complete EIAs against relevant aspects of its environmental programme, which would support this undertaking.

The main points and themes within the report included:

- Engagement on the Equality Objectives 2020 – 2024;
- Draft Equality Objectives 2020 – 2024;
- Monitoring and reporting progress; and
- Publicising the Equality Objectives.

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

- How progress would be monitored;
- That deprivation and poverty should be included in this work, in addition to the protected characteristics listed in the Equality Act 2010; and
- What work would be done to increase the proportion of Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) people in the Council's workforce and to improve representation in the Council's senior leadership.

The Director of Policy, Performance and Reform drew Members' attention to section 4 of the report, which outlined how progress would be monitored. He proposed that the Committee receive a report on an annual basis, which would provide both qualitative and quantitative evidence on progress made. A Member suggested that the Committee receive a progress report sooner than this, in order to check that the

work was on track. The Chair advised that he would be happy for this item to be considered sooner.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods confirmed that the Council's work on equality and diversity went beyond the protected characteristics listed in the Equality Act 2010 and did include deprived communities. The Director of Policy, Performance and Reform drew Members' attention to the Council's Inclusive Growth Strategy and Family Poverty Strategy, which aimed to address issues of deprivation and poverty. He reported that there were actions which the Council was able to take to improve the life chances of people in more deprived communities but that some factors, such as the impact of welfare reform, were not fully within the Council's control, although the Council would try to mitigate their impact.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods informed Members about an Independent Race Review of the Council, reporting that this work was currently being finalised. He advised the Committee that the Council would need an action plan with short, medium and long-term actions to improve representation of both BAME people and disabled people at all levels. He stated that a report on this would be submitted to the relevant committee, which was likely to be either the Audit Committee or the Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee.

Decision

To request a further report on how the Council was achieving these objectives.

CESC/20/19 Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Infrastructure Service

The Committee received a report of the Director of Policy, Performance and Reform which provided an update on the VCSE infrastructure service, specifically on the contract management arrangements put in place since October 2019.

The report stated that officers would work with Macc (the provider) to consider how the VCSE Infrastructure service contract could contribute to Manchester's ambitions to live within the city's science-based carbon budget and become a zero carbon city by 2038 at the latest.

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

- Background information;
- The contract management framework; and
- Next steps.

The Committee discussed the proposals for future communication and engagement with Council Members set out at point 4.1 in the report, including the benefits of both larger sessions for a big group of Members and smaller meetings. Members supported the proposals but commented that two Members' briefings per year would be sufficient, rather than the three or four suggested in the report.

In response to a Member's question on the referral mechanism for local groups, Mike Wild from Macc advised the Committee that this was a proposal for Ward Councillors to be able to refer local groups to Macc for support and to provide Macc with useful information about the group. He offered to re-circulate the link for how to put groups in contact with Macc.

Decision

To support the proposals for communication and engagement with Members outlined in the report, while noting that two Members' briefings per year will be sufficient.

CESC/20/20 Community Events Funding and Applications

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) which provided an update on the funding of Community Events and additional information related to applications to the Community Events Fund.

The report stated that recipients of Community Event Funding support were required to demonstrate a commitment to implementing a range of sustainable event practices as part of the management of their event in order to support the Council's carbon reduction target and work with the Council and partners to support Manchester in accelerating its efforts to encourage all residents, businesses and other stakeholders to take action on climate change. It also stated that it was a requirement that the Council's Sustainable Event Guide for Community Events was used as part of the planning, management and monitoring of sustainable practice and that this had been produced to help support community event organisers incorporate good practice into their event planning and delivery.

The main points and themes within the report included:

- Background information on Community Events Funding;
- Community Events Funding Programme 2019/20, including the allocation of funding; and
- 2020/21 Community Events Funding.

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

- What was the rationale for the different amounts of funding allocated to each event;
- Were there any other sources of funding which could contribute to these events;
- That it would be useful in future to be provided with the reasons why applications had been declined;
- That some events were being funded every year, meaning that less funding was available to new groups to help them become established; and
- Funding for the Wythenshawe Games.

The Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure reported that the Community Events Fund could be used to fund up to 20% of the overall budget of an event so, where larger amounts had been awarded, these were for higher cost events. He

reported that events could cover the rest of their costs from a range of sources, including other funders, commercial income and sponsorship, and that the Council encouraged groups to try to increase their funding from other sources so that they needed less funding from the Council. The Events Lead informed Members that obtaining sustainable funding from other sources could be challenging but that there had been some successes, for example, event organisers obtaining alternative funding from the Arts Council. He advised Members that, where events had received funding from the Council every year for a number of years, this was because they met the criteria and this had been assessed as being justified.

The Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure confirmed that information could be provided on the reasons for the declined applications. He advised the Committee that this Fund was for events which had a citywide remit so one of the reasons for declining applications was that they were for more local events. He informed Members that in some cases the Council supported unsuccessful groups to build their capacity to enable them to successfully obtain funding in future. He reported that, following an underspend on the MCRactive budget, this budget had been used to fund the Wythenshawe Games.

Decision

To note the report.

CESC/20/21 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 noted that the Committee had requested a further report on the Peterloo Memorial and advised that he wanted to schedule this for when there was some substantial information to update the Committee on. He asked the Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure to briefly outline the current position, including when it was likely that there would be something substantial to report.

The Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure reported that discussions had taken place with stakeholders to discuss options to make the Memorial accessible for disabled people but that, while over 20 options had been considered, the majority of these had not been viable. He advised the Committee that a couple of further options were now being explored in detail, for example, considering whether there was sufficient space available around the monument for the proposed design and whether it met with relevant regulations. He informed Members that, following this, a meeting would be held with all the stakeholders and an independent chair to identify the most acceptable option. He suggested that the Committee might want to receive a further report on this at its June 2020 meeting, when a more substantial update should be available.

Decision

To note the report and agree the work programme and to provisionally schedule the Peterloo Memorial report for the June 2020 meeting.