

# **Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee**

## **Minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2020**

**This Scrutiny meeting was conducted via Zoom, in accordance with the provisions of the The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.**

### **Present:**

Councillor Igbon – in the Chair  
Councillors Appleby, Azra Ali, Butt, Hassan, Hughes, Jeavons, Kilpatrick, Lynch, Lyons, Razaq, Strong, White and Wright

**Apologies:** Councillors Sadler and Whiston

### **Also present:**

Councillor Akbar, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods  
Councillor Rahman, Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure  
Councillor Richards, Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration  
Councillor Stogia, Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport

## **NESC/20/25            Tribute to former Councillor Sue Murphy**

The Chair 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.

## **NESC/20/26            Minutes**

### **Decisions**

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2020 as a correct record.

## **NESC/20/27            COVID-19 update**

The Committee considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer that provided a brief summary of the current situation in the city in relation to COVID-19 and an update on the work progressing in Manchester in relation to areas within the remit of this committee.

The main points and themes within the report which included: -

- Describing the Public Health response to the pandemic;
- Information on the financial implications and the additional costs incurred;
- Response and planning ahead for the recovery including a reset of the Our Manchester Strategy; and

- Specific updates on activities relating to the work of Neighbourhood Teams; Compliance and Enforcement; Waste, Recycling and Street Cleansing; Highways; Housing and Residential Growth; Homelessness; Climate Emergency / Zero Carbon.

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

- Paying tribute and appreciation to all staff and those working with partner organisations for responding effectively and professionally during this unprecedented period;
- What was being done to support rough sleepers who had been accommodated in hotels during the pandemic to prevent them returning to the streets;
- What was being done to ensure appropriate levels of funding would be allocated to Local Authorities;
- What were the number of homeless presentations during the period of lockdown;
- What was the approach to promoting active travel and clarification was sought on the rationale not to introduce 'pop up' cycle lanes and a call for discussions on this area to be open and transparent;
- Communication with both residents and local business was essential when planning and developing active travel schemes;
- Noting the reduction in emissions and improved air quality during this period what work was being done to build on these improvements and could data be provided for different areas of the city;
- What analysis had been undertaken of the measures introduced, such as the temporary closure of roads on social distancing;
- How could residents suggest other areas for consideration for the introduction of similar measures to support social distancing and what would be the associated time frame for delivering any scheme;
- Noting the bid to the National Lottery's Climate Action Fund with the Manchester Climate Change Partnership was unsuccessful, what feedback and learning had been obtained that may inform future bids;
- How would the Highways Department and the Licensing Unit work with licensed premises to ensure they were managing their premises safely and in line with guidance as the lockdown began to ease;
- Recognising the important role of all staff who worked for Registered Social Landlords for their dedication in identifying and supporting vulnerable residents;
- What work was being done with landlords, particularly those with student properties to manage waste generated at the end of term;
- An update on the Private Rented Sector Licensing Policy and HMO (house in multiple occupation) Standards was sought;
- When would the green bin collection revert back to a weekly collection;
- Thanking the Biffa crews for their work, however noting that reports had been received regarding the inconsistency in the service provided by Biffa and could this be addressed;
- An update was sought on Household Waste and Recycling Centres;
- Had incidents of flytipping increased and could resources be allocated to tackling identified 'hot spots';
- Thanking residents for providing intelligence and reporting incidents of flytipping and anti social behaviour;

- How could residents report noise nuisance after 10pm;
- Thanking staff working in the Anti-Social Behaviour Team for responding to complaints; and
- Noting the detrimental impact that off sales of alcohol had on green spaces and parks and what was being done to address this.

The Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure informed the Committee that during the pandemic, in excess of 250 rough sleepers had been accommodated as part of the Everyone In scheme. He described that in addition to accommodation every individual had been provided with access to mental health and substance misuse services. He said that to prevent people returning to the street individual personal plans had been drawn up to support people enter secure accommodation and discussions were ongoing with registered landlords and other partners to identify suitable accommodation to facilitate this. He stated that the Government funding for Everyone In was due to cease on the 30 June 2020 and clarification was currently being sought as to future funding arrangements to support this activity. He stated that if required the arrangements for hotel accommodation would be extended to October 2020.

The Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure informed the Committee that in the period 19 March 2020 to 22 June 2020 there had been a total of 430 families and 1737 single people presenting as homeless, which represented a 12.8% decrease on the same period last year.

In response to the comments made regarding the impact on Local Authority budgets and the need for adequate funding the Director of Neighbourhoods stated that representations were being made to Government by the Leader, the Chief Executive and the Deputy Chief Executive & City Treasurer. In addition work was also ongoing with other Core Cities and the Local Government Association to lobby for adequate funding.

The Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure stated that adequate levels of funding were essential to ensure that the most vulnerable people in society could be protected and the appropriate wrap around services could be provided. He encouraged all residents of Manchester to donate to the Big Change campaign rather than giving money directly to individuals on the street as he said this was often counterproductive.

The Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport addressed the Committee and informed the Members that the Executive Members had continued to meet on a weekly basis to co-ordinate activities and collaborate on areas of work, such as the retrofitting of housing stock and the development of the Young Peoples Climate Charter. She stated that the Highways teams had continued to deliver programmes of work whilst adhering to social distancing guidance, with work prioritised across wards and to take advantage of the reduction in traffic witnessed during the period of lockdown.

The Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport commented that Highways had also introduced a number of measure to support social distancing and facilitate people's journeys as people returned to work and the lockdown eased. She

stated that if residents identified other areas that may benefit from similar measures they could suggest these via the Council website and if accepted measures would be implemented as soon as practically possible.

The Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport then addressed the issue of 'pop up' cycle lanes. She described that the Council remained committed to promoting active travel, including pedestrians in district centres. She stated that there were a number of conversations to be had over the summer period regarding future walking and cycling schemes. With specific reference to 'pop up' cycle lanes she stated that there were a number of myths circulating regarding the Council's approach to these. She clarified that not all neighbouring authorities had applied for funding for pop up lanes and evidence indicated that the majority of cycle journeys were undertaken in local, district centres rather than the commute into the city centre. She explained that the Council's Emergency Active Travel submission follows government guidance which stated that the quickest and cheapest way to reallocate road space to cyclists and pedestrians was point closures, which was in effect active filtered neighbourhoods and was a more effective measure to support both pedestrians and cyclists as opposed to pop up cycle lanes that support cyclists only. She said through the proposals, support for additional work was being sought which could be delivered in the short-term, but which also had the potential to secure longer-term benefits for people cycling or walking across the city while remaining committed to delivering high quality, well designed active travel schemes and infrastructure.

In regard to zero carbon, the Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport stated that the green agenda would be at the heart of the city's recovery plans and the Annual Carbon Emissions report would be published in the near future. She stated that a report on the proposals to deliver the Clean Air Plan would be considered by the Executive at their meeting of 3 July 2020 and a public consultation exercise would be undertaken. In response to the data regarding air quality she advised the Committee information and data obtained from the various monitoring stations located across the city could be viewed via the Greater Manchester Clean Air website.

In response to the specific question regarding the unsuccessful applications to funding, the Strategic Lead Policy and Partnerships stated that the bids for the eCargo bikes was oversubscribed nationally, however they would continue to explore alternative funding options for these. He also advised that they were awaiting the formal feedback from the National Lottery regarding the unsuccessful bid, and when this was available this would be shared with Members.

The Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration described that officers working within strategic housing had worked with Registered Social Landlord staff to mobilise a community response to identify and support vulnerable residents. She described that this co-ordinated response had identified people who required support and appropriate services were engaged. She stated that the lessons learnt during this period would inform any future response if required. She paid tribute to the staff, adding that in addition to their normal duties, many had undertaken additional voluntary work to assist vulnerable residents.

The Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration described that many of the normal services, such as repair and maintenance services were beginning to resume and measures were being taken across all providers to ensure these were being reinstated in a coordinated manner so there was consistency in this offer. She described that this was being achieved through the Manchester Housing Provider Partnership that had been established, and the benefits of this local arrangement had been realised during the pandemic.

The Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration stated that the housing allocations scheme, Manchester Move remained suspended with housing priority being given to homeless people and those requiring discharge from hospital. She further described that the compliance and enforcement teams continued to respond to enquiries and a communications exercise had been delivered to inform private landlords of tenants' rights during lockdown to prevent evictions. She described that a tool kit for landlords had been produced at a Greater Manchester level and that the updated Private Rented Sector Licensing Policy and HMO Standards would be submitted for consideration by this Committee later in the year.

The Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration responded to the comments regarding student accommodation by advising that landlords had been engaged with around the appropriate management of their properties at the end of term and this had been supported by the delivery of a Landlord Forum that had been very positive and an opportunity to engage with Landlords. In addition to this, work continued with the Universities and Manchester Student Homes to promote this message.

In regard to Selective Licensing, the Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration stated that the Council remained committed to use this power on the permitted 20% of privately rented sector stock and a rolling programme would be developed to deliver this. She stated ward Members and local Registered Housing Providers would be consulted on these proposals as they progressed and a report would be submitted to the Committee at the appropriate time.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods described the critical role of the Neighbourhood Teams in supporting those residents that were identified as being vulnerable and at risk during the pandemic. In addition, he described the work of the various teams within in the Compliance and Enforcement Unit and the Food and Health & Safety Airport Team for providing specialist food safety advice to those involved in food provision across the city, including to the new Nightingale Hospital. He also advised of the work with Trading Standards to enforce the new regulations during the lockdown period; Environmental Protection Team, Neighbourhood Compliance Team, Environmental Crime Team and the Licensing and Out of Hours Team.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods informed Members that the Licensing Unit had responded by adapting the service to mitigate public safety risks, and measures were put in place to help with the financial hardship faced by many of the individuals in the taxi and private hire trade. The Licensing Unit had also been working closely with their counterparts in Westminster to lobby government to allow more flexibility to Local Authorities with regard to the Licensing rules and regulations so that the businesses could be supported in the coming period.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods stated that currently the green bin would remain on the winter collection cycle, two weekly with priority and resources given to collecting the black bins. He described that following a phased reopening Household Waste and Recycling Centres were now fully operational, except for the textiles. The Strategic Lead, Waste, Recycling and Street Cleansing stated that analysis had indicated that the numbers of visits to these sites was consistent with previous years.

In regard to flytipping, the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods stated that whilst there had been an increase in the number of reported incidents that actual number of incidents was comparable with other years. He stated this could be explained by jobs being reported multiple times.

The Strategic Lead, Waste, Recycling and Street Cleansing stated that if flytipping hotspots were identified resources could be deployed to help identify and prosecute perpetrators.

In regard to Biffa and the reported inconsistency of service in regard to the passageway container service, the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods stated that if this was brought to his or officers attention this would be raised with Biffa. The Strategic Lead, Waste, Recycling and Street Cleansing added that Monitoring Officers are monitoring collections and had flagged some issues with Biffa. She further advised that Members needed to consider that staff from different crews and agency staff had been deployed to support the Biffa crews, which had accounted for some errors. The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods further informed the Committee that 27 new electric vehicles had been purchased and would be in service from September.

In response to the discussion regarding the approach to be taken to support licensed premises and other businesses following the relaxation of lockdown the Head of Compliance, Enforcement and Community Safety stated that the approach taken with businesses was always one of engage, educate and enforce. She described that during the lockdown period there had been a reduction in the number of enforcement notices require and they would continue to work with premises to ensure they were managing the areas outside of their premises appropriately. She described that ultimately it was the responsibility of the premises to manage and comply with national guidance and if a premises was proving to be problematic appropriate enforcement action would be taken.

The Head of Compliance, Enforcement and Community Safety acknowledged the comment regarding the impact of off sales and public space and commented that it was anticipated that as the lockdown was relaxed and licensed premises reopened this should address the issues experienced. The Strategic Lead, Waste, Recycling and Street Cleansing further commented that the Keep Manchester Tidy project had piloted a scheme for parks that would be rolled out.

In regard to residents reporting noise disturbance after 10pm, the Head of Compliance, Enforcement and Community Safety stated that any complaints would be picked up and responded to the next day and residents would be directed to the appropriate website via the pre-recorded message. She stated that the decision had

been taken to end this service at 10pm due to resources, however this would be reviewed.

In concluding the discussion the Chair, on behalf of the Committee thanked all staff, across all partner organisations for supporting the residents of the city during this unprecedented public health emergency.

### **Decision**

To note the report.

[Councillor Appleby declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest as her partner is employed by Biffa.]

### **NESC/20/28            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.

In response to a question regarding the Climate Change Subgroup, the Chair reminded the Committee that at the 25 March 2020 meeting of Council the report 'Constitutional Amendments and Other Matters for Council Business Continuity' was considered and approved. The Committee were reminded that within that report it recommended that Scrutiny Subgroup meetings should be suspended for the time being. The Chair stated that consideration would be given to scheduling an update report on climate change at an appropriate time.

### **Decision**

To note the report.