

Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2019

Present:

Councillor Hacking - In the Chair

Councillors Chambers, Collins, M Dar, Doswell, Douglas, Evans, Grimshaw, Kirkpatrick and Rawson

Councillor N Murphy, Deputy Leader

Councillor S Murphy, Deputy Leader

Councillor Rahman, Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure

Councillor Wills, Lead Member for LGBT Men

Chief Superintendent Umer Khan, Greater Manchester Police (GMP)

Apologies:

Councillors Andrews, Rawlins and Rowles

CESC/19/24 Minutes

The Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure informed Members that, following the item at last month's meeting on the Peterloo Memorial, discussions had taken place with relevant stakeholders, including the artist, disability campaigners and architects, which had identified a number of possible solutions. He advised Members that he would be meeting with representatives of disabled people's groups the following day and, once this meeting had taken place, he would be able to update Members on which of the possible options would be pursued.

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2019 as a correct record.

CESC/19/25 Update Report on Issues of Interest

The Committee received a report of the Deputy Mayor for Police, Crime, Criminal Justice and Fire from the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) which provided an update on a range of issues relating to policing in Manchester.

The main points and themes within the report included:

- Chief Superintendent and Superintendent promotions and postings;
- How elected members could influence policing priorities in neighbourhoods and precept priorities;
- The performance of the 101 non-emergency number; and
- Road safety plans and priorities.

Deputy Leader Councillor N Murphy drew Members' attention to the personnel changes at a senior level in GMP. He thanked the outgoing officers for their work over recent years and stated that he looked forward to working with the new team.

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

- Request for further detail on how the police precept was being spent, particularly at a Manchester level;
- Concerns of local residents regarding police response to incidents and to calls to the 101 non-emergency number and that some local residents were losing confidence in the police;
- That neighbourhood policing teams in some areas were very effective at communicating with Members and community groups but that this is not consistent across all areas;
- What was being done to address issues in the city centre, such as drug-dealing and anti-social behaviour in Piccadilly Gardens, which negatively affected both local people and visitors' impressions of Manchester;
- What was being done to improve traffic policing; and
- Request for more information on the work to tackle knife crime, following the allocation of additional funding from central government to address this.

Chief Superintendent Umer Khan informed Members that the precept had funded 50 additional police officers across Greater Manchester, 14 of whom had been allocated to Manchester. He advised that these had been split between the three police districts in Manchester and that the officers would be undertaking problem-solving and targeted work as part of the neighbourhood teams. He informed Members that, while the rest of the precept funding was being used at a Greater Manchester level, it was funding work such as TravelSafe and improvements to the 101 non-emergency number which would also benefit Manchester.

Chief Superintendent Khan outlined the work taking place at a neighbourhood level, including specific examples of work in a Member's ward to address local people's concerns. He recognised that there were challenges and commented that he would like to do more but advised Members that he and his colleagues at GMP was doing their best with the resources they had. He invited Members to join him on a tour of duty to see the work that police officers were doing and the challenges they were facing. He reported that he was working with partners to introduce a consistent model of delivery across all neighbourhoods. He outlined how he was promoting the importance of communication, including with Ward Councillors, across the neighbourhood policing teams and informed Members that he would welcome feedback.

The Deputy Leader Councillor N Murphy reported that, while he would like to see more police officers, GMP was having to work with limited resources. He also advised Members that, in addition to visible neighbourhood policing, GMP was doing a lot of less visible work on issues which as Child Sexual Exploitation and organised crime. He reported that steps were been taken to improve the 101 non-emergency number, citing the introduction of live chats to enable members of the public to communicate with GMP through their website. He advised Members that it was also important to review the type of calls which were being received through the 101 number, including whether some of them were non-police-related calls, and stated that a public awareness campaign was needed on when to contact the police and what issues to contact other agencies about.

Chief Superintendent Khan informed Members that he had attended a meeting of the City Centre Accountability Board the previous day which had provided an in-depth update on the partnership response to crime and anti-social behaviour in the city centre. He reported that, while he recognised the challenges in the city centre, there had been some progress in recent times, including a reduction in robberies in Piccadilly Gardens as well as reductions in some other types of crime. He outlined police operations which had taken place to tackle crime in the city centre and reported that a partnership approach to addressing other issues such as homelessness and begging had also contributed to improvements. He suggested that the Member who had raised this issue could be provided with the minutes of this meeting as an update of the work taking place in the city centre and invited her to speak to GMP's city centre team to give her a fuller update on the issues she had raised.

Chief Superintendent Khan reported that, due to reductions in police funding from central government, local traffic policing had been centralised into one force-wide resource, which was then allocated based on an assessment of threat, risk and harm; however, he reported that GMP was also investing in community initiatives, working with local residents on a range of preventative work.

The Community Safety Lead informed Members about work to develop an approach on how to use the recently allocated funds to address knife crime. She reported that an engagement session would be taking place on 7 August 2019 and that youth service providers and partner organisations were invited to get involved in this work.

Decisions

1. To express the Committee's thanks for the work of GMP officers, recognising the challenges that they face in performing their role.
2. To request clarification on whether any of the precept was being used to address the deficit in police pensions.

CESC/19/26 Trans Update Report

The Committee received a report of the City Solicitor which provided an update on the work undertaken in Manchester to improve outcomes for its trans residents including progress against the recommendations within the Research Study into the Trans Population of Manchester, commissioned by the Council and published in 2016. Aligned to the overarching themes of the research study, the report provided details of ongoing work aligned to each theme, along with other examples of relevant work in this area. Additionally, the report considered the significant increase in reported trans hate crimes in Manchester and outlined the reasons for and responses to this as an area of focus.

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

- Young people and education;
- Health;
- Housing;

- Domestic abuse;
- Trans hate crime;
- Additional activities; and
- Gender Recognition Act consultation.

The Virtual School Head informed Members that the Trans Action Group referred to within the report was holding a meeting the following week and invited Members to attend that meeting or a future one. The Chair asked that details of this meeting be circulated to Members of the Committee.

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

- How the specific needs of trans people would be taken into account in the work on the LGBT-Affirmative Extra Care scheme, given that their needs differed from those of LGB (Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual) people; and
- Hate crimes against trans people, including the reluctance of some trans people to report hate crimes, prosecutions for hate crimes and which Third Party Reporting Centres (TPRC) trans people would feel comfortable using.

The Project Manager for Extra Care reported that those providing the extra care services should receive additional training on the needs of the LGBT communities, including needs specific to trans people, and that the information in the Research Study into the Trans Population of Manchester would also be used to inform the care provided. She informed Members that there had been an initial workshop at the LGBT Foundation which had sought views from LGBT people on what they wanted within the Scheme and that the representative of the Pride in Ageing Advisory Group who was sitting on the steering group was a member of the trans community who provided feedback from the wider trans community.

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager advised Members that the increase in reported hate crimes against trans people appeared to be due to an increased confidence in reporting hate crimes to the police. He advised Members that he would do some further work to look at prosecution rates and trans-friendly TPRCs. A Member asked to be provided with further information on the trans-friendly TPRCs, which the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager agreed to provide.

The Lead Member for LGBT Men informed Members that he agreed that there was an increased confidence in reporting hate crime which partially explained the increase in reported hate crimes but he also believed that there had been an increase in hate crimes being committed against LGBT people generally. He advised Members that it was important to continue to work with the police and other agencies to address this and to share best practice. He also stated that it was important to address misinformation and asked that a 'mythbuster' leaflet on trans issues produced by LGBT+ Labour be circulated to Members of the Committee, to which the Chair agreed.

Decisions

1. To request that details of the Trans Action Group meeting be circulated to Committee Members.

2. To request that the 'mythbuster' leaflet on trans issues produced by LGBT+ Labour be circulated to Members of the Committee.

CESEC/19/27 Delivering the Our Manchester Strategy

The Committee received reports of the Deputy Leaders Councillor N Murphy and Councillor S Murphy and the Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure. The reports provided an overview of work undertaken and progress towards the delivery of the Council's priorities as set out in the Our Manchester strategy for those areas within their respective portfolios.

The main points and themes within Deputy Leader Councillor N Murphy's report included progress and outcomes in relation to:

- Policing;
- Anti-social behaviour;
- Ensuring that high quality jobs were being created in the city and were available to local people; and
- Implementation of the Good Employment Charter.

The main points and themes within Deputy Leader Councillor S Murphy's report included progress and outcomes in relation to:

- The Our Manchester Strategy;
- Social inclusion;
- The Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS);
- Homelessness and rough sleeping;
- International work; and
- The Local Government Association (LGA).

The main points and themes within the Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure's report included progress and outcomes in relation to:

- Widening access and participation in libraries, culture and parks;
- The Youth Offer; and
- Manchester schools, which was within the Executive Member's portfolio until May 2019.

Members asked a range of questions of the Executive Members. Those which related to the Committee's remit included:

- Whether the Council consulted with relevant groups to ensure that parks met the needs of older people;
- How leisure services could be made accessible to working people on low incomes;
- How local history projects could be used to engage with older people;
- Request for more information on the expansion of the Anti-Social Behaviour Team; and

- To suggest that the Committee receive a report on the impact that the Our Manchester Strategy was having on local communities, including levels of engagement and whether things were being done differently.

The Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure informed Members that a wide-scale consultation had been carried out when the Parks Strategy was developed two years ago. He reported that the membership of the 'Friends of' parks groups tended to be older and that work was taking place to try to make them more representative of park users. He advised Members that bespoke plans were now being developed for individual parks, in consultation with a range of people, and that this included work to make the parks accessible for all residents. He informed Members about local history projects taking place in libraries and he also reported that a Love Exploring app had been developed which could currently be used in seven Manchester parks to learn more about the park, including its history.

The Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure informed the Committee about the work taking place to widen access to and participation in leisure and cultural activities, which involved identifying and addressing the barriers that different people faced. He also informed Members that all Manchester residents were entitled to a 30% discount at Council leisure facilities, through the Mcr Active card scheme, and that free swimming was now offered to under-17s throughout the year; however, there was a challenge in communicating what was on offer to local communities. He informed Members that, following the trialling of the Mcr Active website, a company had been procured to develop a platform that residents could use to find out about local leisure activities.

The Deputy Leader Councillor N Murphy reported that the Anti-Social Behaviour Team had previously been reduced due to austerity measures but that, due to the level of demand and following a Council Motion, funding had been identified to double the size of the team, which included additional staff for out of hours support and support in the community; however, he advised that the staffing level was still below what it had been before the cuts.

The Deputy Leader Councillor S Murphy welcomed the suggestion that the Committee look at the impact of the Our Manchester Strategy. She reported that some of the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) groups which had received funding through the Our Manchester VCS Fund were undertaking projects based within communities and she suggested that some of these groups be invited to the Committee's September meeting for the item on the Our Manchester VCS Fund to talk about what they had done. The Chair supported this suggestion.

In response to a question about the declaration of a Climate Emergency, which was passed at the Full Council meeting on 10 July 2019, the Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure outlined how actions to address this were already being taken in relation to culture and events. He reported that this included energy efficient cultural venues and events, including ensuring that all Council-led events had a zero carbon footprint and were sustainable. He advised the Committee that the next step was to share this best practice with those running community events.

Decisions

1. To receive a report on the impact that the Our Manchester Strategy is having on local communities, including levels of engagement and whether things are being done differently.
2. To invite some of the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) groups which have received funding through the Our Manchester VCS Fund for community-based projects to the Committee's September meeting to talk about what they have done.

CESC/19/28 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.

Decision

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