

Resources and Governance Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2007

Present:

Councillor Watson – In the Chair

Councillors Andrews, Clayton, Isherwood, Judge, Leech, Morrison, P. Murphy, Sandiford, Smith and Trotman.

Present by Invitation:

Councillor Priest, Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources

Councillor Swannick, Executive Member for the Environment

RG/07/39 Urgent Business

Decision

To agree to consider as urgent business a report of the Chief Executive in relation to recent developments in relation to the regeneration of the Eccleshall Street area and financial provision relating to land transactions, in order that the Committee can make recommendations to the Executive on 19 December.

RG/07/40 Eccleshall Street CPO

A report of the Chief Executive was tabled in relation to recent developments in relation to the regeneration of the Eccleshall Street area

The Chief Executive outlined the background to the Council's regeneration strategy for this area and the most recent advice from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to enhance safety precautions in relation to sites across the country which affects the Eccleshall Street site. This would massively reduce the number of residential units which can be incorporated into the scheme, thus undermining viability and the rationale for commencing the CPO process. The new requirements would necessitate a review of the regeneration priorities for the wider area around Eccleshall Street, and of the balance between residential and employment related commercial development. Since the outcome of this review was bound to be significantly different from the scheme currently being promoted under the CPO, he and the City Solicitor had decided that the Council should withdraw from the CPO at this stage. The Chief Executive also reported the establishment of a special team to support local residents. Once the review of regeneration priorities had been completed arrangements would be made to report back to the appropriate scrutiny committees.

A Member questioned the extent to which any of the expenditure already committed by the Council could be salvaged and the extent to which grant funding might be

withdrawn or reduced if the housing element of any regeneration on the site had to be reduced. The Chief Executive outlined the position regarding HMRF and NWDA grant funding for the regeneration of the area and the discussions which were taking place with those organisations on the need to remodel the regeneration proposals.

A member was also concerned that any reduction in the housing yield from this regeneration area would add to the overall housing deficit when demolitions were compared with new housing units produced.

Decision

To note the report and to thank the Chief Executive for his full appraisal of the current situation; to support the officers in their endeavours to secure outcomes that best secure the ambitions of the Council for the regeneration of this area of the city and for the local community, and to request the Chief Executive to report in more detail to a future meeting when information about any financial impacts for the City Council is known.

RG/07/41 Minutes

Decision

1. To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 15 November 2007.
2. To appoint Councillor Sandiford as an additional member of the Human Resources Sub Group.

RG/07/42 CASH Grants

A report was submitted on the development of the City Council's Cash Grants programme and to seek views on future developments.

The Chair indicated that the report as presented did not address the full scope of the report requested in terms of drilling information down to ward level and that as a consequence the opportunity to make the process transparent and accessible, and to engender community engagement in the widest sense had been lost. Acknowledging these points the officers indicated that it was possible to table information to demonstrate the ward by ward breakdown of applications made by group and grants approved and to bring a paper to the next meeting which dealt with the impacts which these grants had made within local communities.

Turning to discuss the report submitted, and in particular the section which sought views about the further development of the Cash Grants programme, members agreed with the suggestion that the 'clean and safe' general objective was now too narrow and suggested that each ward should be allowed scope to determine its own priorities in line with the Ward Plan, and to incorporate Community Pride objectives.

In a wider discussion members sought information about the process for dealing with overall underspends, noting that in the present year past underspending had resulted in each ward receiving an additional £2500; the decrease in the number of applications was noted and it was suggested that this may be partly attributable to the perception by some residents groups that Council departments had been less than fulsome in their support for schemes put forward by local people. Members suggested that officers needed to give thought to the way in which the scheme was currently promoted so that new groups were engaged, and to consider how greater flexibility could be built into the application process so that late applications did not lose out.

The Executive Member responded to issues raised regarding increasing the annual budget buy an annual inflationary factor and the appropriateness of using Cash Grants as a vehicle for securing greater community engagement.

Decision

To note the report at this stage pending further report.

RG/07/44 State of the City Report

A report of the Head of Corporate Performance was considered outlining key performance issues as outlined in Manchester's State of the City report.

Members welcomed the sustained reduction in crime since 2003 and suggested that this was a clear outcome of the introduction of neighbourhood policing.

In relation to the data base supporting the figures in relation to educational attainment a member highlighted that this data only related to local authority schools in Manchester and that a truer picture of the performance of all Manchester children would only be obtained if access was possible to the data from all schools within the city and for those Manchester children educated outside the district.

Members noted that in the context of a rising city population and a growing economy most of the city still attracted a deprivation ranking and that the key challenge facing the city was that of ensuring that more Manchester residents shared in the economic success of their city.

Decision

1. To thank the officers for an informative report.
2. To request the officers to present quarterly reports similar to the reports submitted to the Manchester Partnership.
3. To recommend to the Director of Children's Services that representations are made to the Department of Education and Skills urging that a more representational basis for data collection is needed in relation to pupil attainment that presents a truer and more complete picture of the

performance of all Manchester children, including those educated in the independent sector and those attending schools outside the district.

RG/07/45 Section 106 Agreements

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Planning setting out the current position regarding benefits accrued from Section 106 agreements with developers on a ward by ward basis. The report also outlined how decision were made regarding the content of agreements and provided an update on the government's recent announcement relating to planning gain supplement.

The Head of Planning reported that the economic vibrancy of the city had resulted in £17M being generated through S106 agreements negotiated in relation to a number of developments within the city. He stressed the necessity of S106 resources being closely linked to the development site; he also highlighted that the use of S106 Agreements could be scaled back by the government's Planning Gain Supplement and that the development of the PGS proposals would need to be kept under careful review.

Some members were concerned that there was no scope for local councillors to be either informed that S106 agreements are being negotiated in their ward or to put forward suggestions for the local use of S106 monies. The Executive Member for the Environment suggested that the vehicle for local member involvement was in terms of drawing up the Ward Plan in which local members' ambitions for their area could find expression. It was then for the officers to deliver on those ambitions by whatever means.

Decision

1. To acknowledge the progress that has been made and the benefits that have accrued from the negotiation agreements with developers, and to welcome the project management approach now being adopted in relation to S106 agreement.
2. To request that the completed ward breakdown of Section 106 agreements be made available to local councilors through the Ward Co-ordination process.

RG/07/46 Information and Scanning Report

A report of the City Solicitor was submitted.

Figures provided by the Chief Constable in relation to police officer numbers by Division were tabled at the meeting and members agreed that these would be noted.

The Chair reported that the Committee's recommendations to the Executive in relation to Public Sector Service Boards would be considered by the Executive on 19 December and that she would attend the Committee to support the recommendations. Members asked that there be a report back to the next meeting.

It was also reported that a report on the work of the Human Resources Sub Group would be brought to the January meeting and that the a report on the work of the MEP Sub Group would be reported to this Committee and the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee in February.

Decision

To note the report.

(Councillor P. Murphy declared a personal interest as Chair of Greater Manchester Police Authority)