

# **Resources and Governance Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

## **Minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2008**

### **Present:**

Councillor Watson – In the Chair

Councillors Andrews, Bhatti, Clayton, Isherwood, Morrison, P. Murphy, Brian O’Neil, Sandiford, Smith and Trotman.

### **Present by Invitation:**

Councillor Leese, Leader of the Council

Councillor Priest, Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources

## **RG/08/7 Minutes**

### **Decision**

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 10 January 2008 as a correct record.

## **RG/08/8 Local Area Agreement**

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Executive and City Treasurer inviting comments on the development of the new LAA for Manchester so far as it relates to the remit of this Committee and on how it wishes to scrutinise delivery of the LAA.

Referring to the State of the ward reports a member enquired how often these would be reviewed. Officers indicated that the review process would be annual and timed to feed into the Council’s business planning process.

In relation to Section 6 of the report (Resources) a member enquired whether there was any scope for ward coordination to have direct budgetary control over specific aspects of ward investment. The Leader of the Council indicated that the chief focus of ward co-ordination needed to be in relation to the bigger picture but he accepted the legitimate role of local members in being able to effectively influence wide-ranging investment priorities in the ward.

The Chair enquired how the Committee would be enabled to scrutinise the high level commissioning strategy. Officers indicated that work was in hand to draw up a joint action plan with Manchester PCT against which the Committee would be able to scrutinise implementation and performance. The Chair also sought to establish how the 7 specific challenges had been arrived at. Officers indicated that two had emerged from the State of the City report; from discussions with Executive Members that had identified items within the Labour Manifesto for Manchester, and from discussions with partners. The list was not exhaustive and could be added to at any time.

## Decision

1. To support the Story of Place recognising that this will need to be broken down into manageable elements for effective scrutiny.
2. To commend the proposed choice of priorities as they relate to the work of this Committee.
3. To agree that the Committee should consider performance information on a quarterly basis, including the performance of partners.

(Councillor Murphy declared a personal interest in this item as a member of the Manchester Partnership Board)

## **RG/08/9 Manchester Improvement Programme**

The Committee received a report on the background and progress on the Manchester Improvement Programme. The Deputy Chief Executive (Performance) informed the Committee that the Programme remained an ambitious programme to transform services in order to improve the customer experience and improve efficiency. Very good progress had been made with the programme, and the focus and drives which would be needed in order to deliver the next stages of the vision for service improvement. In this context he paid tribute to the work that Pete North had done as Manchester Improvement Programme Director over the past two years.

Members replicated the endorsement of the contribution made to the process by Pete North. Members expressed support for the huge improvements made in the Council's Bereavement Service and the overall levels of service improvements and efficiency savings achieved. The realisation of savings in relation to home to school transport costs achieved through the enablement of more children deemed capable of using public transport after training, better use of commissioned services and realignment of routes were also applauded.

A member referred to the savings targets for the next three years that he suggested would be extremely challenging to achieve without service reductions. The City Treasurer indicated that he remained confident that this level of savings was achievable within a carefully managed 3-year budget strategy.

Members were also anxious to establish how the drive for efficiency was being approached in relation to the Council's support for voluntary organisations. Officers indicated that whilst the Programme did not expressly relate to voluntary organisations but that they would be addressed as part of the commissioning strategy. Members highlighted that the late notification of grants to voluntary organisations was often a barrier to efficiency and, whilst recognising that this had been an issue in the past due to the timing of government allocations, officers indicated that voluntary organisations should enjoy greater certainty within the 3-year budget strategy now established.

Referring to the use of libraries as access points to local services a member highlighted that not every ward had a library. Officers acknowledged this indicating that the approach being adopted was by way of focusing access in those locations

where people gathered naturally and also by being innovative in terms of building access into new local facilities, for example, as part of Building Schools for the Future and the Academies Programme.

### **Decision**

1. To welcome the progress that has been made and the significant service improvements and efficiency savings that have been realised so far.
2. To record the contribution made to the process by Pete North as Director of the Manchester Improvement Programme and to welcome the appointment of Elaine Bowker as Programme Director.
3. To request a similar report monitoring progress in February 2009.
4. To note that a report in relation to the Town Hall is due to be considered by the Committee early in the 2008/9 Municipal Year, and to request also a report on the approach to procurement for which the Council is taking an AGMA lead.

### **RG/08/10 Education Service Re-design**

The Committee received a report on the work of the Joint Sub Group established with the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee to oversee the development and implementation of service redesign proposals, particularly in so far as human resources issues were concerned.

Members referred to the clerking service in support of the work of school governing bodies and it was suggested that this would form part of the report on School Governance arrangements to be submitted to a future meeting.

The Chair made reference to some remaining elements of work and emphasised the importance of these highlighted for attention by other groups. Members added Home to School Transport as a further issue to be addressed by the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Turning to look at the latest staffing position members noted (a) the number of appointments made in the first tier of ringfencing; (b) the latest estimates of the overall reduction in the number of posts within the redesigned service, and; (c) the established arrangements for dealing with employees that are not allocated to posts. The Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources indicated that any proposal to vary from the established processes for dealing with staff would be reported in advance to the Committee.

### **Decision**

1. To thank the Joint Sub Group for its work.
2. To agree that the Human Resources Sub Group should consider any emerging staffing issues.

3. To agree the action plan as amended by the inclusion of Home to School Transport.

## **RG/0811 Information and Overview Report**

The Committee received a report of the City Solicitor on the forward work programme and monitoring progress in relation to issues previously raised. The report also contained information about the proposals of the Post Office's Network Change Programme.

Members referred to the issues previously raised with the Executive regarding the membership of District Public Service Boards and sought an assurance that the Chair of the Committee would be included in the further discussions prior to the issues next being considered by the Executive. The Leader of the Council indicated that the further report on this issue was unlikely to be considered by the Executive until early in the new Municipal Year and that he anticipated that this Committee would consider the report prior to the Executive meeting.

### **Decision**

1. To note the report.
2. To add a review of the Tri-partite Agreement for the management of Sportcity to the work programme.