

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

### **Minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2010**

#### **Present:**

Councillor Watson - In the Chair  
Councillors Bhatti, Clayton, B Fisher, Glover, McCulley, Morrison, P Murphy, E Newman (Items RG/10/52 - 58), Sandiford, Swannick and Trotman.

Councillor Priest - Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources  
Councillor Smith - Assistant Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources

#### **RG/10/52 Urgent Business**

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Governance Subgroup on 2 September and a report on the Eastlands Stadium and Sportcity Funding Arrangements were submitted as urgent business.

#### **Decision**

To note the Chair's decision to accept the items as urgent business.

#### **RG/10/53 Minutes**

Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 22 July 2010 were submitted for consideration along with minutes of the meeting of the Governance Subgroup on 2 September 2010.

#### **Decision**

To approve the minutes submitted as correct records of the meetings and to endorse the recommendations of the Governance Subgroup.

#### **RG/10/54 Information and Overview Report**

A report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit was submitted. This included an overview of the major financial decisions the Council would be taking over the next four months which related to the Committee's remit. Members noted that the value of the contract for the provision of event security, stewarding and taxi marshalling was incorrectly stated as £5000,000, the correct value was £500,000.

The report included responses to recommendations made by the Committee at its previous meetings. Members noted that the Head of Planning was due to circulate information regarding the level of section 106 contributions in different wards over the next few weeks.

The Committee received a briefing on the impact of the 2010 budget on benefits and council tax in Manchester. Members noted that the government had published a consultation paper entitled '21<sup>st</sup> Century Welfare' which set out plans for fundamental structural reform in the Welfare System. The Chair requested that the Council's response to this be included in the Committee's next Information and Overview Report.

Members thanked the Head of Revenues and Benefits for providing a detailed and informative report but felt that the consequences for Manchester residents could be very serious. The Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources said that the consequences would be a setback for those who were on the brink of obtaining employment. The Committee agreed that all Councillors should be sent the report so that they had the most up-to-date information regarding potential changes to the council tax and benefits system.

The briefing set out that based on initial assessments 82% of households affected will see the amount of their Local Housing Allowance reduce by around £12 per week, taking approximately £5.1 million out of the local private rented sector. The Chair asked the Head of Revenues and Benefits how she felt proposed changes to the benefits system might affect Manchester residents. She felt that in the short-term tenants in the private rented sector would be most affected, but in the longer-term the social rented sector might also experience significant impacts particularly in relation to changes to non-dependant deductions and in some cases a 10% reduction in benefit after 12 months.

### **Decision**

1. To agree the work programme.
2. To request that all Councillors receive the briefing on the impact of the 2010 budget on benefits and council tax in Manchester so that they have the most up-to-date information regarding potential changes to the council tax and benefits system.
3. To request that the Council's response to the consultation paper '21<sup>st</sup> Century Welfare' is included in the Committee's next Information and Overview Report.

### **RG/10/55      Town Hall Transformation Programme**

A report of the Strategic Director of Transformation was submitted outlining progress made on implementing the Town Hall Transformation Programme. The report described the movement of staff from the Town Hall Extension to One First Street and the establishment of a new Customer Service Centre and its relationship with the Corporate Contact Centre. The Strategic Director advised that the Town Hall Transformation Programme was proceeding on time and within budget.

Members noted that a three-day public consultation had taken place focusing on the design competition for St Peter's Square. A member asked how many members of

the public got involved and whether officers felt the consultation was long enough. The Head of Public-Private Partnerships advised that attendance at the consultation was good, and a lot of interest in the competition was generated. He agreed to circulate statistics about attendance at the event to members of the Committee.

Members noted that One First Street was rated as being excellent for its energy efficiency. The Chair stressed the importance of planning to make the Town Hall Extension more energy efficient as part of its refurbishment. Members requested further details of plans to do this as part of the next update to the Committee on the programme.

The report included details of how many customers had used the customer service centre during its first two months of operation. A member asked if there was any information showing whether this was an increase or decrease in the total number of customers who had been contacting different services separately before the Customer Service Centre opened. Committee members also felt that the Centre was easier to reach from the south of the city than the north, and asked whether visitor figures reflected this. The Strategic Director advised that overall there was more contact with customers since the Centre opened; she offered to circulate an analysis of where customers were coming from to visit the Centre. A member highlighted that the free city centre shuttle bus goes to One First Street, and that it may be worth highlighting this to potential visitors. The Strategic Director advised that she would look at how this could be done.

She added that part of the transformation of the Council's approach to customer service would include fewer services offered face-to-face and more customers accessing services remotely, including on their computer or television. She asked members if they would contribute to the communications campaign to let residents know that they can access services through their televisions once this had become possible. Demonstrations would be available showing how this could be done.

Members noted the performance management information that would be available to monitor the type of service request and how efficiently requests are being handled. Members felt that it would be helpful for them in their ward role to know what sorts of service customers were asking for. The Chair recommended that this could be done usefully through ward co-ordination meetings.

Members commended the project plan and the management of the programme. The Chair stated that the next report should include details of how council services will be accessed remotely more easily, and how the energy efficiency of the Town Hall Extension can be improved.

## **Decision**

1. To support the progress made to date in the deliver of the Town Hall Transformation Programme, and to request that the next update on the programme include details of how council services will be accessed remotely more easily and how the energy efficiency of the Town Hall Extension can be improved.

2. To request that information about how many members of the public got involved in the consultation on the St Peter's Square design competition and where customers were visiting the customer service centre from be included in the next Information and Overview report for the Committee.
3. To recommend that the Strategic Director of Transformation look into how to publicise better that residents can use the free city-centre shuttle bus to visit the Customer Service Centre at One First Street.
4. To recommend to the Strategy Leader, Area Co-ordination that members are supported to look at information about what services customers are requesting through the Customer Service Centre in ward co-ordination meetings if they wish to do so.

### **RG/10/56                      Review of Community Facilities**

A joint report of the City Treasurer and Director of Neighbourhood Services was submitted. One of the key aims of the review was to assess coverage of community facilities across the city with the long-term ambition of ensuring that all communities have access to at least one facility within their neighbourhood. The report also provided an update on work to ensure services could be accessed locally by residents more easily.

The Deputy Head of Corporate Property introduced the report and said that the Council was looking to make better use of its buildings for the community, and this included sharing buildings with public sector partners and voluntary and community sector agencies.

Members supported the work but identified some barriers to its successful operation, including that council staff often use buildings during normal working hours while the voluntary and community sector would often want access outside of these hours. Members also stressed the importance of the Voluntary and Community Sector Letting Policy being applied in all cases. The Deputy Head of Corporate Property advised that the policy supported a consistent and even basis for charging. She advised that she had gone to some ward co-ordination meetings to discuss how barriers to the use of buildings by the community could be overcome.

Members felt that there were some buildings in parks which were used infrequently, and which better use could be made of. The Deputy Head of Corporate Property advised that she was discussing how the Council could do this with the Executive Member for Culture and Leisure. Some of the buildings contained high levels of asbestos, and work was taking place to identify the best solution for these premises.

Members felt that the review of community facilities should be submitted to all ward councillors so that their local knowledge of the ward they represent can identify further opportunities to make suitable buildings available to the community. The Committee agreed that amendments to the document from this process should be reported back to the Committee in January through the information and overview report.

The Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources felt that discussions in ward co-ordination meetings and Neighbourhood Funding Strategy proposals could be used to support the process of making the best use for the community out of council-owned buildings.

The Chair stressed that she felt many buildings used by the community were very valuable assets and should be protected and maintained. She also stressed that wards can be artificial constructions and community use of buildings might sometimes be more usefully looked at on a larger scale. Access to buildings for the voluntary and community sector was looked at by regeneration teams, and by groups of ward co-ordinators in cluster meetings.

### **Decision**

1. To note the progress with the review of community facilities, and the ambition of ensuring that all communities have access to at least one facility within their neighbourhood
2. To request that the Deputy Head of Corporate Property provide all councillors with the review of community facilities for comments, so that their local knowledge of the ward they represent can identify further opportunities to maximise the benefit from council-owned buildings. The Committee agreed that amendments to the document following this process should be reported back to the Committee in January in its information and overview report.

### **RG/10/57            Review of AGMA Scrutiny Arrangements**

The report to the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) Executive Board meeting of 25 June 2010 on the Review AGMA Scrutiny was submitted to the Committee. The report set out that the proposals for a Greater Manchester Combined Authority highlighted that there should be a review of scrutiny arrangements which takes into account the views of district scrutiny committees and the AGMA Scrutiny Pool alongside the requirements of current or future legislation. The report was submitted to allow the Committee to consider its views on scrutiny arrangements for Greater Manchester.

The Chair commented on the proposals both as a member of the Committee and a member of the AGMA scrutiny pool. She felt that meetings between scrutiny officers across Greater Manchester should take place to link sub-regional and local scrutiny, and to facilitate the exchange of information. She added that in her opinion the membership of the AGMA Scrutiny Pool was too large, which prohibited in-depth scrutiny which got to the heart of the key issues in the sub-region. She felt that the Pool should focus in more detail at the beginning of the year on what items it will consider over the coming year, so that it focuses on the issues that matter and makes best use of the Pool's time. She felt that the approach to work programming the scrutiny committees in Manchester had adopted this year had worked well, and that information about this approach should be provided to officers supporting the Pool as part of the review.

The Committee supported the views of the Chair.

## Decision

To submit the Committee's views to AGMA so that they may be taken into account in the review of AGMA scrutiny.

[Councillor Glover declared a personal interest in this item as a member of Greater Manchester Waste Disposal Authority]

[Councillors McCulley and Sandiford declared personal interests in this item as members of Greater Manchester Integrated Transport Authority]

[Councillor P Murphy declared a personal interest in this item as Chair of the Greater Manchester Police Authority]

[Councillor Swannick declared a personal interest in this item as Chair of the Greater Manchester Waste Disposal Authority]

## RG/10/58                      Neighbourhood Funding Strategy

A report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Performance) and Director of Neighbourhood Services was submitted updating the Committee on the status of the current year Neighbourhood Funding Strategy (NFS) proposals. The report covered improvements to the communications with elected members about the NFS.

Members noted that the concerns expressed previously in the Committee had largely been addressed, although not all members were satisfied with the format the information was sent out in. Members welcomed the clear communication of the milestones that different proposals had reached, however it was felt that the information could include more detail about alternative sources of funding for proposals that could not be pursued.

A member felt that there should not be a limit of five proposals per ward. The Executive Member stated that the limit was introduced following recommendations from a subgroup, endorsed by this Committee. There was some confusion regarding the exact wording of the recommendation and the Chair asked the Committee's support officer to provide some advice on this for the next meeting.

Members noted that a progress report was due to members on 20 October to update them on responses to NFS proposals and current activities in Highways. The Committee recommended that this update is sent out in hard copy.

## Decision

1. To note the report and the work to improve communication with ward councillors, and to request that the comments of the Committee be taken into account in future communications.
2. To request that the Committee's support officer provide some advice on the recommendations of the Committee about limiting the number of proposals per ward.

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**RG/10/59 Exclusion of the Public**

A recommendation was made that the public be excluded during consideration of the next item of business.

**Decision**

To exclude the public during consideration of the next item which involved consideration of information exempt from publication relating to the financial or business affairs of a particular person and public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

**RG/10/60 Eastlands Stadium and Sportcity Funding Arrangements**

A report of the City Treasurer and City Solicitor was submitted. The report was due to be submitted to the Executive on 15 September to recommend that it approves revised rental arrangements for the City of Manchester Stadium and a revised agreement with Sport England for the use of the rent proceeds to support facilities across the whole Sportcity site. The Committee was asked to comment on those recommendations.

Having discussed the report, the Committee were satisfied that the arrangements represented a good deal for the city and would continue to support the regeneration of Sportcity and the surrounding area. Members agreed unanimously to commend the recommendations in the report to the Executive.

**Decision**

To commend the recommendations in the report to the Executive.

[Councillor Swannick declared a personal interest in this item as a director of New East Manchester Ltd.]