

MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL
REPORT

COMMITTEE: Finance and General Purposes Overview and Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 22 February 2007

SUBJECT: Overview and Scrutiny and the Manchester Partnership

REPORT OF: Assistant Chief Executive (Performance)
Head of Democratic Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT

Following consideration of a report on the development of the Manchester Partnership in November, the Committee established a Sub-Group to consider in more detail the links between Manchester's partners, the ward co-ordination process, Local Area Partnerships, elected Members and local people and how the wider interests of local accountability can best be achieved within that structure.

This work has strong links with proposals set out in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill to increase accountability in local decision-making by strengthening the role and remit of Overview and Scrutiny to our partners.

This report provides a summary of these proposals, highlights existing good practice and sets out the Sub-Groups recommendations for strengthening the Overview and Scrutiny function of the Manchester Partnership.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee

- 1) Consider the issues highlighted in this report and their implications for Overview and Scrutiny including the Sub-Group's recommendations;
and
- 2) Discuss how Overview and Scrutiny can further engage with the work of the Manchester Partnership

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1. Information

- 1.1 Overview and Scrutiny is an important part of the decision-making process. It gives elected Members and the general public the opportunity to influence how the Council and external organisations deliver services to the people of Manchester. It is also a way of holding the Executive to account to ensure that its decisions are in the best interests of the City.
- 1.2 The role of Overview and Scrutiny is to ensure that public services are delivered to local people in line with the Council's agreed vision for the City - the Community Strategy. Although Overview and Scrutiny is independent from the Executive, it is still part of the Council and should work constructively with decision makers to help to achieve the Council's aims and objectives. Proposals in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill seek to extend the role of Overview and Scrutiny Committees to hold partners to account and to have a positive influence on the way that services are delivered with the ultimate aim of securing better outcomes for local people.
- 1.3 Our partners are already committed to delivering better outcomes for Manchester residents through the Community Strategy. Through developing links with the Manchester Partnership and fulfilling Members renewed role as democratic champions, Overview and Scrutiny provides an opportunity to reality check that commitment and test the outcomes that are being delivered.

2. Strengthening Overview and Scrutiny

- 2.1 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill was introduced in December 2006 and is expected to be passed in the Autumn before coming into force from 2008. It contains proposals to extend the powers of Overview and Scrutiny Committees, notably:
 - Community Call for Action: Councillors will have the right to refer any local government matter, related to their ward, to the relevant scrutiny committee
 - A requirement for the Council's Executive to respond to Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommendations within two months, detailing what action the Executive proposes to take;
 - Partner organisations to the new statutory Local Area Agreements required to provide information to Overview and Scrutiny Committees
 - These partners could also be required to respond to Overview and Scrutiny recommendations about targets adopted by the LAA. Partner organisations would have to have regard to these recommendations.
 - All upper tier local authorities will be required to produce Local Area Agreements

- Public Sector Partners will have to co-operate with the local authority to agree targets in the LAA
 - Both Local Authority and its partners must have regard to the LAA targets once agreed.
- 2.2 On a practical level, this will mean that Overview and Scrutiny Committees will have the power to look at any issue that affects local people. This in effect redefines the role of Overview and Scrutiny from a primarily internal service-based review process to a strategic place shaper, working with and influencing key partners to secure better outcomes for Mancunians.
- 2.3.1 This will also improve the role of Overview and Scrutiny in engaging with local people on topics that really matter to them by providing a mechanism for ward councillors to raise and pursue difficult and intractable local issues and to ask for these to be subject to public scrutiny.

3. The Manchester Partnership

- 3.1 The new Community Strategy was approved by full Council in July 2006 (see appendix 1). The Manchester Partnership is responsible for ensuring delivery of the Community Strategy by the key stakeholders. The delivery framework for the Community Strategy consists of:
- The Local Area Agreement which is Manchester's formal agreement with Government containing the targets we are committed to deliver in the first three years
 - Partner Agreements which focus on the changes needed by partners to achieve the step change in performance needed, for example, an agreement is being developed with the NHS organisations, who are a key employer in the City, about what they will do to enable more local people into employment
 - Mancunian Agreements provide residents with the opportunity to opt in to playing their role in achieving the vision.
- 3.2 These overarching city-wide agreements are underpinned by thematic strategies and action plans, strategic regeneration frameworks and ward plans. The Public Service Board is clear that an area focus needs to become embedded within the Manchester Partnership with a clear relationship established between the Public Service Board, district structures and ward co-ordination.
- 3.3 Work has been progressed by the Partnership over the course of the last year to identify those key activities that will have the greatest impact on the delivery of the spines within the Community Strategy. These activity maps will drive the work of the partnership through a thematic and area focus.

3.4 The challenge for the next stage of development for the partnership is threefold:

- Ensuring that partners are held to account for their contribution to the delivery of the Community Strategy
- Ensuring that resources are directed towards the key activities that will have the most impact on delivery of the spines
- Ensuring that all thematic partnerships have a neighbourhood focus

4. Overview and Scrutiny of partnerships in Manchester - Examples of Best Practice

4.1 There are a number of examples of where Overview and Scrutiny Committees have established effective working relationships with external organisations, most notably the NHS and the Police. This reflects the close working relationship between these partners and the Council for a number of years, through the Crime and Disorder Partnership (since 1998) and the Joint Health Unit (since 2002).

4.2 Health and Well-Being Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4.2.1 The Health and Well-being Overview and Scrutiny Committee was established in 2003 to discharge the Council's scrutiny functions under the Health and Social Care Act.

4.2.3 The Committee has the power to hold to account a range of NHS bodies, including the Primary Care Trust, Acute Trusts and Mental Health Trusts, for the provision of health services that meet the needs of the people of Manchester.

4.2.4 In June 2006 Health and Well-Being took an active part in the consultation on service reconfiguration of Mental Health Services, taking the role of Quality Assurance i.e. ensuring the implementation of service change meets the original stated objectives.

4.2.5 In December 2006 they proactively investigated sexual health services, of importance in Manchester because of the performance information on incidents of sexually transmitted infections and the current service performance. The Committee's recommendations reflected the wider perspective they are able to bring to Manchester issues, raising the community and voluntary sectors potential to support this issue and ensuring adequate recharging to other areas.

4.2.6 In both of these examples and in most of the work of the Health and Well-being Overview and Scrutiny Committee Manchester PCT are actively involved with strong support from the Joint Health Unit. This strong working relationship has encouraged the PCT and other local health bodies to bring issues to the Overview and Scrutiny Committees on their own initiative, proposing items that they believe that Scrutiny should or could usefully consider.

- 4.2.7 The Joint Health Unit has been instrumental in developing successful relationships through the provision of policy support and guidance. This has facilitated the development of a scrutiny programme that helps address local concerns as expressed by Members and that provides democratic overview of the policy agenda being put forward the NHS locally.
- 4.2.8 Policy input from the Joint Health Unit has been crucial in supporting NHS organisations to prepare appropriately for attendance at the Committee, which makes the meetings more productive for both sides.
- 4.3 Social Strategy Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- 4.3.1 The Social Strategy Overview and Scrutiny Committee has built links with the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership through individual contact with the Police, supported by the Crime and Disorder Partnership Team.
- 4.3.2 Representatives of Greater Manchester Police routinely attend the Social Strategy Overview and Scrutiny Committee and they proactively cover diverse topics such as domestic violence, licensing and safer neighbourhoods and it is clear that the Police recognise the value in the democratic link of Overview and Scrutiny.
- 4.3.3 There have been innovative examples of reporting through this area too; a review of drug services involved ex-offenders talking to the Committee about their experiences and how the service had engaged with them.

5. Components of successful scrutiny of partnerships

- 5.1 From the experience set out above the following factors appear to contribute to successful scrutiny of external organisations:
- Personal contact from senior, and other, officers in public sector organisations
 - Ensuring that there is adequate support dedicated to the scrutiny process and building links between Overview and Scrutiny and partner organisations
 - Proactive consultation by partners on issues affecting the residents of Manchester
 - Use of a variety of methods to provide better understanding of the work of the partnership and partner organisations – such as site visits and other ways of gaining a service users perspective.

6. The role of Overview and Scrutiny

6.1 There are a range of key contributions that Overview and Scrutiny Committees could make that would add value to existing partnership processes. These include:

- Scrutiny of Local Area Agreement resource allocation
- Scrutiny of individual service organisations contribution to delivery of the Community Strategy spines
- Policy development, particularly in relation to key issues arising from the performance management process
- Enhancing performance analysis with intelligence gained from wards, for example, performance data may show x but my constituents are telling me y – what does this tell us, how can this inform strategic-level decision-making

6.2 The Sub-Groups suggest that there are a number of preconditions that need to be in place:

- There needs to be regular contact and a positive relationship between the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny committee and the Chair of the thematic partnership.
- Partners need to understand that Overview and Scrutiny is one-removed from the Council as a provider and the means through which they are democratically held to account.
- Partners need to understand the opportunities that are afforded through Overview and Scrutiny, in particular, the opportunity to raise issues, to gain a neighbourhood level perspective on the impact of key policies and actions and to raise the profile of the work they are doing.
- Members need to be kept informed of issues discussed and actions agreed within partnerships and where they can therefore add value through a particular focus
- Appropriate training and support needs to be made available to Overview and Scrutiny Members to enable them to effectively fulfil this enhanced role.

6.3 Performance Management

6.3.1 In order to make this work on an ongoing basis, the functionality of Overview and Scrutiny needs to be incorporated into core partnership processes rather than being seen as an add-on. The Manchester Partnership is in the process of developing a new approach to performance management and it is suggested that this framework could provide the means for embedding the role of Overview and Scrutiny.

- 6.3.2 There is a general shift towards performance analysis within the Partnership in order to facilitate an enhanced understanding of what performance information is telling us and make decisions based on this understanding.
- 6.3.3 The Public Service Board will receive quarterly performance information and analysis to enable them to hold thematic and area partnerships to account for their delivery of the Community Strategy priorities and to determine where the Board itself needs to be focussing its attention.
- 6.3.4 There are three likely outcomes of performance analysis where there are concerns about performance:
- A strategy and clear management action are in place to address area of concern and no additional action required
 - The issue needs to be escalated
 - Analysis highlights the need for further policy development to address a particular issue
- 6.3.5 Overview and Scrutiny Committees may wish to focus on those issues that need to be escalated by scrutinising individual service agencies about their role in improving performance. Overview and Scrutiny Committees may also be in a position to add to the analysis carried out through Members' local knowledge.
- 6.3.6 Additionally, Overview and Scrutiny Committees could play an active role, with partnerships, in addressing policy development needs. In order to make this happen, Overview and Scrutiny Committees must be informed of the outcomes of performance management meetings.

6.4 Scrutiny of Resources

- 6.4.1 In the Autumn of 2004, an officer-led scrutiny exercise was carried out within the partnership to ascertain the extent to which Neighbourhood Renewal Funding (NRF) was being directed to addressing key partnership priorities as well as the impact of NRF on the delivery of mainstream services. The results of this exercise influenced the allocation and use of NRF for the following year.
- 6.4.2 Overview and Scrutiny may wish to adopt a similar role through which there is scrutiny of Local Area Agreement (LAA) spend in relation to the spines and the impact of LAA spend on mainstream service delivery.

6.5 Mancunian Agreements

- 6.5.1 Seven pilot Mancunian Agreements are being developed currently to test out this new way of working with residents. Mancunian

Agreements bring together residents, councillors and public agencies to jointly work towards the resolution of local issues.

- 6.5.2 In addition to member involvement in the development of local agreements, Overview and Scrutiny Committees may wish to hold partners to account for their role in developing Mancunian Agreements and in particular, the extent to which they are reshaping services to respond to issues identified locally through the Mancunian Agreement process.

7. Sub-Group Recommendations

- 7.1 The White Paper proposals signify a shift in focus for Overview and Scrutiny Committees from scrutiny of Council services to scrutiny of outcomes for residents. It is therefore vital that the Overview and Scrutiny process is designed to support Members in this new role.
- 7.2 The current work to develop the Manchester Partnership provides an opportunity to incorporate the Overview and Scrutiny function into the partnership's work.
- 7.3 Whilst welcoming the proposals to strengthen and extend the role of Overview and Scrutiny, the Sub-Group were conscious of the impact that this would have on the way that Overview and Scrutiny operates.
- 7.4 The Sub-Group has therefore recommended the implementation of following practical measures to aide the development of links between Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the Manchester Partnership:
- That Overview and Scrutiny Committees should establish contact with nominated officers from partnerships to ensure effective working relationships
 - That Scrutiny Chairs should to have a standing invite to observe meetings of the Manchester partnership within their remit
 - Additional training and support to Scrutiny Chairs and Members to further develop Overview and Scrutiny externally
 - To request that Officers develop a mechanism for reporting quarterly monitoring information on partnership performance to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committees;
 - To request that Members of the six Overview and Scrutiny Committees regularly receive hard copies of agenda papers and minutes for the corresponding thematic partnership.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 It is suggested that the Committee consider the Sub-Group recommendations and address the following questions to establish how

the Overview and Scrutiny process can best add value to delivering the Community Strategy:

- What performance information would most help Overview and Scrutiny Committees to identify and focus on the right issues?
- What methods of conducting Overview and Scrutiny meetings or Sub-Groups will be the most productive in scrutinising partnerships?
- What do Overview and Scrutiny Committees need to be able to scrutinise partnerships effectively?

8.2 To assist the Committee in addressing these questions there will be a brief presentation on:

- The Community Strategy
- The Structure and membership of the Manchester Partnership
- Available Performance Information – how the Local Area Agreement works
- The allocation of funding to the Manchester Partnership