

MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETINGS JANUARY 2016

I attended MCC's Communities Scrutiny Committee on 27th January and the Health Scrutiny Committee on 28th January. As usual, I'm happy for material in my report to be forwarded to other interested parties, with the proviso that it's my interpretation of events and details may not necessarily be completely accurate.

The **COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** was chaired by Cllr Tracey Rawlins, with Exec members Cllrs Sue Murphy, Nigel Murphy and Flanagan also in attendance. Committee member Cllr Royle also reappeared following his temporary suspension in the early autumn.

Item 5. **Budgets and Business Plans.**

Cllr Flanagan briefly took over the meeting to deliver his customary 'party political broadcast' against the Government's cuts. He noted that the Government have done a 'U turn' over Council tax, allowing Councils to increase them, but taking away the Council tax freeze grant. Manchester plans to allocate a 2% increase entirely to the adult social care budget, but will also add a 1.9% increase to cover loss of central funding.

All the papers on the item were taken as read and the Chair went through the budget proposals for different areas section by section. On the Voluntary Sector, Cllr Cookson was assured that the Neighbourhood Investment Fund (NIF) grants would remain at the same level as last financial year. Guest speaker Nigel Rose, Strategic Head of Commissioning at Manchester Community Central (MACC) opined that generally the proposed cuts to the voluntary sector are very small, but they will affect some organisations and other changes will have an impact on the voluntary sector. He said the voluntary sector was disappointed at the amount of information coming from the Council re this budget – there had been very little until the final announcement. He asked for more involvement in the future and mentioned the improvement in ethical procurement, which could help the voluntary sector. Cllr Flanagan said the short notice of the government's settlement figures had caused the lack of consultation. He added that the Council intended to reduce the size of some contracts to enable the voluntary sector to bid for them.

On Domestic Abuse, Cllr Rawlins was assured there would be no cuts to this sector in the budget. There was a question on monitoring the Advice, Information and Guidance budget outcomes. Officer Hazel Summers said she was happy to provide a future report on the impact of advice services in different wards.

On Community Safety (Mediation), Cllr Sue Murphy said that this was mainly delivered via other providers and the council is looking at options to meet demand in a different way. However, this had not been arranged yet, given the budget reduction.

The Chair concluded this item by mentioning the Committee would like to see simpler monitoring of outcomes in these areas and will have a look at the 'deal' combining Community Association Grants and NIFs.

Cllrs N. Murphy and Flanagan left the meeting after this item.

Item 6. **Organisational Planning and Performance Management Process.**

Officers Sam McVeigh (Strategic Planning Workforce Lead), Head of Customer Services and 3 Directorate Quality Champions (!!) attended for this item, which I think was about delivery of the equality quality plan, and how budget changes will affect equality issues. The item was mostly

non-understandable to me and, so it seemed, to the Committee members, as they were reluctant to ask any questions about the report. Cllr Royle asked about the change in Home Office requirement to treat everyone as an individual, even with family groups. The only other comment came for the Chair, who noted the tight time scale and how the Equality Impact Assessments could be finished before the budget is agreed.

Item 7. Manchester All Age Disability Strategy.

This concerned the first draft of a report concerning the elements of this strategy and a proposed consultation exercise which is to be part of the strategy. Officer Zoe Robertson, Lead Commissioner for Disability and Older People, several other officers and representatives from disability organisations joined the meeting. The consultation on the strategy goes live at the weekend and goes on until the 18th March. The CEO of Breakthrough UK Manchester (Michelle Scattergood?), a disability charity, welcomed the strategy generally. She had some comments about the composition of the proposed Partnership Board and the need to have disabled representatives on it. She also favoured an independent Chair (Committee Chair Cllr Rawlins is likely to be heavily involved – she is down to Chair the Board). Michelle added that the engagement group proposed is critical – the strategy needs to be a co-production', not a consultation. The Committee listened to 2 interesting 'stories' from disabled guests. Wheelchair-user Elaine talked about how she has 'escaped carer control' as a result of direct payment of benefits to her – she can make her own decisions about carers etc again, as she did before she became disabled. She mentioned the problems that cuts to transport services Ring and Ride and Local Link have caused her, and how, although train and Metrolink services are accessible to her at stations, difficulties arise in the journey from her house to the station. She also noted farcical situations such as restaurants with disabled toilets but steps inaccessible to people in a wheelchair. Another guest, Geraldine, the parent of a 14 year old boy with learning difficulties, told the Committee about her interactions with the education system. She praised the Council's attitude and help with her situation, but was concerned that other parents less articulate than her be helped with schooling issues. She also mentioned the need for proper training for transport personnel re disabled passengers. Officer Hazel Summers (Strategic Director of Adult Social Care) pointed out that the strategy is for the City, not just the Council. She also observed that many disabled people have no contact with Council services, but the questionnaire needs to reach them as well. Michelle added some comments about the pillars of disability living and that needs of individuals varied a lot. For example, someone may be financially literate but have difficulties with transport. Cllr Ali asked about the composition of the Partnership Board. An officer responded that it is not established yet and further work is required to include key public and private sector representatives. The Chair was assured that all alternative formats for the questionnaire will be ready in time.

The Chair closed the item by welcoming the strategy and asked that all Councillors be circulated with details of the strategy and consultation to help ensure it reaches the widest audience.

Item 8. Overview Report.

There were 2 items noted as outstanding. The Chair confirmed that there would be no meeting of the committee in March (because of the way the calendar falls) and April (due to proximity to Council elections). She asked for any budget issues to come back to the Committee in time for inclusion in the February meeting.

The meeting closed at 1555hrs.

The **HEALTHY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** was chaired by Cllr Bev Craig and attended by a good complement of members, plus Exec members Cllrs Flanagan and Andrews.

Item 1. **Items of Urgent Business.**

Very unusually, there were two of these. The first concerned the acceptance of the recommendations of a meeting on the future of mental health services in the city between a group of councillors, officers and representatives from voluntary groups held in January (minutes were supplied).

The second urgent item was raised by Cllr Swannick, who reported on a Care Quality Commission (CQC) consultation he had attended, with other representatives from outside Manchester. The meeting had concerned the CQC Strategy 2016-2020, and Cllr Swannick interpreted as a hidden text that CQC was under funding pressure. They may move to a risk based assessment rather than inspecting all organisations regularly. Those present at the consultation meeting were not in favour of this change, as it was hard to see how all areas would continue to be covered. He noted that the consultation on this issue concludes on March 14th.

Item 5. **Joint Adults and Childrens Budget and Business Plan.**

This item was accompanied by a massive report of more than 150 pages of bureaucrat-ese. After the 'party political broadcast' from Cllr Flanagan (see item 5 of the Communities meeting above), the Committee members attempted to get to grips with all the information – and, not surprisingly, failed! The report has also been on the agenda of the Young People and Children Scrutiny Committee.

Section 5a concerned the actual budget figures, about which there was little discussion.

Section 5b was about the priorities to be delivered in the Childrens and Families directorate in 2016/17 alongside the budget proposals. On the section about adult social care proposals (4.3 on page 27), Hazel Summers, Strategic Director of Adult Social care, said that home care employees will receive the new national 'living' wage as part of the budget. She also mentioned ethical procurement issues in relation to contractors involved in home care. I didn't understand most of this section, like most of the Committee I suspect. One interesting fact that came out was that STIs are highest in the north east of the city. Cllr Swannick emphasised the need for health visitors for children for e.g. inoculations, checks on new babies and asked if the cuts will affect these. An officer said that the cuts would not affect the number of health visitors.

(RV comment: generally, it seems the line between Council and NHS involvement in these areas is becoming increasingly blurred, and therefore less manageable?)

Discussion eventually moved on briefly to section 5c, about the Manchester Health and Social Care Locality Plan, which had been discussed at the December Committee meeting.

Section 5d was about the proposals to expand the pooled fund, introduced by Sam Finch, Head of Finance for Children and Families. The Chair commented that it was not new information.

Item 6. **Alcohol and Drug Services in Manchester.**

The report was introduced by Stacy Smith and Lisa Collier of CRi. David Regan, Director of Public Health and Maria Earle, Commissioning Manager, Public Health, were also in attendance. Stacy and Lisa gave a decent PowerPoint presentation about the services that CRi are taking over from 1st April – CRi have provided services on the clinical side for the last 3 years. They explained that the

model for the new service has changed to be integrated with the community rather than based on remote sites that clients have to travel to. They will be subcontracting some of the services. CRI have previously taken over providing these services, including staff, in Nottingham and Birmingham so they have good experience.

The Chair moved to questions. Cllr Watson was concerned about alcohol abuse in older people - Mr Regan assured Cllr Watson the service would interact appropriately with Age Friendly Manchester organisations. Cllr Wilson asked how the service will reach 22,000 people, what was the evidence base for community orientated services and about co-ordination with other services, without real answers provided initially. Cllr Stone asked about the lack of differentiation between adults and children. I sensed that there was some hostility from Councillors towards this service going to a 'private company'. (RV – perhaps they have learned a lesson after the Ambulance Service privatisation cock-up). I was impressed with Stacy and Lisa's patient and convincing answers to most of the Committee's questions.

Item 7. Progress in Implementing the Care Act (2014) in Manchester.

The report was taken as read and the Chair moved immediately to questions. The report contained quite a lot of detail on budget, funding streams etc and was difficult for a lay person to understand well. Councillors also had problems with it and the discussions started to wander into incomprehensibility, with particularly Cllr Watson droning on and on to little effect. At this point the meeting had run well over time (1625 compared to normal finish at 1600) so I left. I had been the only member of the general public attending.

Items that may have been discussed after I left were the Health and Wellbeing Update and Overview Report.

RV – this was arguably the worst scrutiny I have attended so far. Cllr Craig, normally a decent Chair of the Committee, also seemed to give up trying to keep to time but could reasonably argue that the sheer volume of material slated for discussion was too much for one meeting to deal with.

Dick Venes, 5th February 2016.