

Economy Scrutiny Committee 22nd July 2015

The meeting began with a discussion on the decision not to name Wythenshawe as a specialist hospital in the overhaul of healthcare in Greater Manchester. The meeting was told by the Officer that this decision was not expected to affect the MediPark development at the hospital. (MediPark is a planned private sector development based around health companies and research.) It was previously suggested that this development might be at risk if Wythenshawe was not named as one of Greater Manchester's specialist hospitals. Councillors welcomed the reassurances the development would continue but most were angry at the decision as they felt that clinical excellence should be the only consideration in deciding which hospital achieved specialist status. Cllr Davies was less critical of the decision and was more accepting that geographic considerations should have played a part in deciding which hospitals received the specialist status.

The Chair then noted that the committee had not received a number of reports in a timely manner. She requested that reports should be made available a week before the meeting.

The meeting then received a report from an officer on Skills Devolution. The item was the most impenetrable I have ever had the misfortune to listen to. There is very little I feel I can accurately report on as I could discern so few details. Judging by their questions the councillors didn't seem to have a much greater grasp of the material. I was glad that Dick Venes, Secretary of Manchester Green Party, was present and agreed with my assessment. If he wasn't there I would have probably blamed myself for not understanding the report rather than the obtuse report itself.

From what I could gather from the report, the devolution agreement will give the Council and Greater Manchester in general more power over the skills budget. The plan as laid out seems to be very heavy on expecting workers and students to do more to obtain more skills and a lot less on inducing employers to offer better training. The plan focuses on targeting diminishing resources on foundational skills (Maths and English). The Committee noted that there was a further risk to the skills budget in light of Mr Osborne's recent announcements regarding cutting budgets.

The meeting then moved onto a report on the European Social Fund (ESF). The report explained that the money from the ESF was given to Greater Manchester, and its activities were defined by the Greater Manchester Strategy. The fund aims to promote: employment and labour mobility; education, skills and lifelong support; and social inclusion and poverty prevention. One interesting thing in the report is that the number of young people where there is no data as to whether they are in employment, training or education is not known, this 'unknown number was highlighted as a growing concern'.

It was noted that the Government had recently announced that it would reduce the amount of control local bodies had in regards to ESF. There were a few other questions from councillors which amounted to minor clarifications on the report.

Item 7 was a report on Skills Demand and Supply by Angela Harrington, Head of Work and Skills. Angela didn't read out the report but just gave a very brief overview. (The full report can be found on the Council website, along with other documents, if you wish to see it.)

Councillors made a number of remarks about employment in general rather than commenting directly on the report. Cllr Raikes asked whether data was available at the ward level. Angela replied that it wasn't

The meeting closed at 11:47

The above is summary of the meeting and not set of exhaustive minutes. If you want to watch the meeting, you can do so on the Council website www.manchester.public-tv/core/portal/home

For more any questions email mschreibke@hotmail.co.uk

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