

Executive Meeting 29/07/15

The meeting started with Council Leader Richard Leese instructing reporting Officers to explain, in brief, what the items being presented were. (MS: This is probably because the last two meetings of the Executive have lasted under fifteen minutes and consisted of Mr Leese reading out an item and the item then being agreed.)

The first item concerned a report on the electoral registration activity conducted by the Council. Reporting Officer Brown stated that the government's plans to bring forward changes to the compilation of the register would result in 25,000 people dropping off the system. There was also some discussion surrounding the fall in young adults on the register and this was said to be partly due to the Council not sending out letters last year asking households to note the names of people just under the age of 18. It was stated that these letters would be sent out this year.

Item 5 was a report on the future of the Children's Advocacy service. This report was scheduled to appear before the last Executive meeting but was withdrawn due to inaccuracies contained within it. There was no real discussion of this item, which proposes transferring the service to from the Council to an independent provider.

Item 6 concerned the Council's Policy on travel support access to education – for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), and this was agreed with no discussion.

Item 7 was a report on the drafting of a new Manchester strategy. Cllr Leese warmly welcomed the report noting that it was not a report from the Council but from the whole City. Cllr Stogia asked a number of questions; firstly why does the plan span 10 years? Secondly, why is it not clearer what the priorities of the strategy are; and thirdly why is there no outlined plan on how to deal with Manchester's air quality problem? Cllr Battle asked how young people were going to be engaged with the process. The officer responded by essentially stating that a ten year time span had been chosen as this was a simple time frame. It was said that a hierarchy of the stated goals would appear during the course of the process (MS: clear as mud). In terms of air quality very little was mentioned. Youth engagement was largely addressed by stating that the Youth Council would be involved. (MS: in my opinion the Council too often takes the view that meeting with selected representative groups is an adequate way to ensure that the entire population has been consulted.)

Item 8 concerned a report on the Council's global budget monitoring. This report was agreed with no comment. This was also the case with item 9, a report on the Capital Programme Monitoring.

Item 10 revolved around the Council's strategy towards the land at Viola Street, Clayton. Cllr Priest introduced the item along with Strategic Development Officer Eddie Smith. The plan, which has stalled for a number of years, is to build 20 new affordable homes. (MS: these figures are very small in comparison to the Council's grand plans to build thousands of non-affordable apartments.)

Item 11 also concerned developments, this time it was the New Cross scheme in Ancoats and Clayton ward. Cllr Ollie Manco of Ancoats said that he was disappointed that he had not heard about the scheme before the public. Mr Leese admitted that the leadership was slipping in regards to informing councillors about plans for their wards. (MS: I think that it is stunning that the Councillor and the Council Leader didn't mention the need to adequately consult the public in regards to major developments.)

Item 12 concerned the plans for First Street and were agreed with no discussion. Item 13 centred on development of the former BBC site on Oxford Road. The meeting was informed that the planned Royce Institute would not be built on the site. The meeting was assured that the land was earmarked for another science-based use.

Item 14 concerned strategic development plans around Cornbrook. Cllr Lee-Ann Igbon (Hulme ward) raised concerns that she had not been informed of the plans in her ward before the public. Mr Leese played down the impact of the scheme and suggested that as only a small bit of land was affected it wasn't that important. (MS: this statement seems disingenuous as the Cornbrook plan is integral to Greater Manchester's Pomona plan.)

Item 15 revolved around the City Centre Strategic Plan. Everyone was glowing about the grand plans. Cllr Pat Karney noted that it was important to make sure that the City Centre made sense as a whole after all the building work. Item 16 stayed in the City Centre and addressed the Factory Project. The three speakers were all glowing about this report, too.

I wasn't able to cover the last two items which were reports on the latest Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) meetings as the webcast stopped before the end of the meeting.

The meeting suggested that the Council leadership is aware that the last two meetings were ridiculously short and painted the Council in a poor light. However, the response was to offer slightly more explanation rather than to try to take an overall more accountable approach.

The above is an abridged impression of the meeting. For more detail please contact me at: mschreibke@hotmail.co.uk

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