

Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Committee meeting Tuesday, 21 July 2015

Agenda and reports:

www.manchester.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/2381/neighbourhoods_scrutiny_committee

Video of meeting:

www.manchester.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/184294

Chair: Cllr Daniel Gillard.

Also present: Cllr Nigel Murphy – the Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services.

Interests

Regarding the item to be discussed on taxi licensing, Cllr Shaukat Ali asked if as a licence holder he should declare an interest. It was decided that as he has a financial interest in the area he should leave during the discussion

Matters arising from the last meeting

Regarding the minutes of the previous meeting there was discussion about a petition asking the council to ban plastic bags in the city. The legal position of the council is that they cannot pass a local law that would contradict government legislation.

Item 5: Neighbourhood Focus

Report of Deputy Chief Executive (Growth & Neighbourhoods):

www.manchester.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/19196/5_neighbourhood_focus_%E2%80%93_detailed_design

The report is essentially an overview of how the council will be reorganising neighbourhood-focused services in the light of budget cuts. The report was not presented at the meeting but councillors were able to ask questions. Most of the questions members of the committee had were handled at previous briefings. Many of the questions related to whether the new plan would be able to deliver the same service with a reduced budget and staff, to which Cllr Nigel Murphy answered the new plan was the best they could do with the money available. Several councillors were concerned that the details of the staffing structure were not in place since many members of staff would be required to essentially apply for their old jobs. They were told that this information would be available at the end of August, and the new neighbourhood teams would be in place by October-November. Also the new senior staff structure was in briefings given to members of the committee but not in the report.

The report details how different areas of Manchester will be grouped in the providing of these services. It was asked whether or not this would affect the existence of the

Wythenshawe area committee but the committee generally only deals with planning not neighbourhood issues.

Many members were keen to get updates of the progress of the restructuring and the chair suggested an update at the meeting in January.

Item 6: Response to Manchester Evening News article alleging licences have been issued to drivers who have criminal/motoring conviction

Article here: www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/revealed-how-officials-sex-offenders-8293131

There was a presentation of an inquiry into the article which concluded there was no substance to the allegations in the MEN article. There were suggestions from some of the members asking for a retraction but it others felt one was unlikely to be forthcoming. Other member pointed out that the particular report that the MEN had in response to a freedom of information request may seem to validate the story but was incomplete on its own. Therefore there were suggestions that the procedures for dealing with FOI requests needed to be tightened up.

A member of the public was invited to speak and asked for an external investigation into the licensing committee, but was told that this was not the remit of the neighbourhood scrutiny committee.

There was a discussion about the general procedure for granting licences in the city and a consensus that it was robust. However many members pointed out that many taxis from outside the city operate in Manchester, some from areas that have much less strict licensing, Rossendale was frequently mentioned. Specifically mentioned was that taxis from other areas can only work for private hire companies and cannot act as black cabs and pick people up on the street, although this happens frequently. The chair suggested a press release to clarify this. There was also discussion of possible advice to give to the public about only using Manchester-licensed cabs.

It was pointed out that Manchester taxi drivers need to complete a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check every three years, which requires them to disclose any convictions. Many other services in the council require checks every 1 or 2 years.

Item 7: Overview Report

www.manchester.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/19155/7_overview_report

This report mostly concerns actions to be carried out from previous meetings and there were a few minor questions.

The meeting closed at 15:17