

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
HOUSING PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD THURSDAY, 11TH JULY, 2019 AT GMCA BOARDROOM**

PRESENT:

Councillor John Walsh (Chair)	Bolton
Councillor Dorothy Gunther	Bury
Councillor Jon Connor Lyons	Manchester
Councillor Mandie Shilton-Godwin	Manchester
Councillor Barbara Brownridge	Oldham
Councillor Linda Robinson	Rochdale
Councillor Ray Dutton (substitute)	Rochdale
Councillor Janet Mobbs	Stockport
Councillor Mike Glover	Tameside
Councillor Liam Billington	Tameside
Councillor Fred Walker	Wigan

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Julie Connor	Assistant Director, Governance and Scrutiny, GMCA
Joanne Heron	Statutory Scrutiny Officer, GMCA
Matt Berry	Governance and Scrutiny Officer, GMCA
Anne Morgan	Head of Planning Strategy, GMCA
Steve Fyfe	Head of Housing Strategy, GMCA
Kevin Lee	Director of Mayor's Office, GMCA
Steve Warrener	Finance and Corporate Services Director, TfGM

HPE/158/19 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from: Councillor Sharmina August (Salford), Councillor Amy Whyte (Trafford), Councillor Kevin Procter (Trafford), and Councillor Stephen Gribbin (Stockport).

HPE/159/19 APPOINTMENT TO CHAIR

That a Chair be appointed for this Committee for 2019/20.

RESOLVED/-

Councillor John Walsh was appointed as Chair of this Committee for 2019/20.

HPE/160/19 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR

That a Vice Chair be appointed for this Committee for 2019/20.

RESOLVED/-

Councillor Steven Gribbin was appointed as Vice Chair of this Committee for 2019/20.

BOLTON
BURY

MANCHESTER
OLDHAM

ROCHDALE
SALFORD

STOCKPORT
TAMESIDE

TRAFFORD
WIGAN

HPE/161/19 MEMBERSHIP FOR 2019/20

To detail those Members appointed to this Committee for 2019/20, and provide a quick reference point.

RESOLVED/-

That the Membership of this Committee be noted.

HPE/162/19 MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT

To remind Members of their obligations under the GMCA Members Code of Conduct.

RESOLVED/-

That Members of this Committee note the Code of Conduct.

HPE/163/19 ANNUAL DECLARATION OF INTEREST FORM

Members that are yet to complete an annual declaration of interest form were reminded to do so. It was stated that these to be collectively be published on the GMCA website.

RESOLVED/-

That the item be noted.

HPE/164/19 TERMS OF REFERENCE

To note the Committee's terms of reference.

RESOLVED/-

That the Terms of Reference be circulated to Members of this Committee

HPE/165/19 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

RESOLVED/-

To note there were no declarations received.

HPE/166/19 GREATER MANCHESTER STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN AND PERFORMANCE UPDATE

Julie Connor, Assistant Director Governance & Scrutiny, GMCA introduced the item. It was stated that the 2 year Implementation Plan was agreed in April 2018, and outlines the targets and ambitions to be achieved by the Combined Authority by 2020 with a RAG rating on progress. It was noted that this went to all 3 GM Scrutiny Committees with each asked each to focus on the areas they cover.

Anne Morgan Head of Planning Strategy and Steve Fyfe, Head of Housing Strategy, GMCA were introduced to the Committee to cover housing and planning strategy, Steve Warrener, Finance and Corporate Services Director TfGM to cover any transport queries. MARK Atherton, Assistant Director for Environment, GMCA to attend the next meeting of this Scrutiny to cover items relating to the GM Green Agenda.

A Member commented on Priority 5 – Connectivity, specifically asking around the dashboard supporting indicators that indicate that 55.3% of short journeys under 2km are made by walking or cycling in 2015-17. It was felt that this figure may be inaccurate as it was thought that there is a greater proportion who conduct this journey by car.

It was clarified that these numbers need to be checked with information provided on where/how they were sourced. This to then be fed back to this Scrutiny at a later date.

The question was also asked if work is underway to secure more funding for the Challenge fund with the understanding that the vast majority of the money first secured now being allocated.

It was clarified that the Made to Move strategy highlighted a figure of around £1.6 billion required to fund. TfGM have worked with districts to bring forward proposals and schemes through 5 tranches. All of the schemes across the GM districts have been reviewed to check accuracy and see if other funding methods are available. This can then identify schemes for the allocated £160 million and create a substitute list of other schemes that are ready and require funding. It was highlighted that GM is lobbying Government for funding via a few channels, such as via the Bee Network from the Walking Cycling Commissioner Chris Boardman, The Our Network vision and also likely through the Comprehensive Spending Review. It was stated that if Members wish, TfGM can bring more detailed updates on specifics at future meetings, with regular reporting going through to leaders of the Combined Authority bi-monthly.

A Member asked for clarity on the amber rating for Housing Provision with the specific question as to what does 'influencing infrastructure providers' actually mean.

It was clarified that infrastructure had been a focus in GM over the last 12 months with concerted activity to deal with a range of challenging issues. This led to the establishment of the Infrastructure Board which is attended by infrastructure providers, and offers an ability to work more closely with them on their investment programmes so these are aligned with plans for growth or areas where infrastructure is under pressure.

There are also plans to produce an infrastructure strategy/action plan which could lead to a different way of providing infrastructure and doing it in a more integrated way in areas where the most change is expected. It was noted that the Infrastructure framework highlights the challenges, with the next stage being how these are to be tackled.

A Member queried what the role of housing developers is, and what influence can be put on them to financially contribute to infrastructure.

It was stated that as part of the evidence base for the next phase of the GMSF, the GMCA are looking at strategic viability of developments. This is following planning guidance changing in 2018 to assess the plan so developers don't need to conduct viability assessments at planning application stage. If viability is demonstrated for sites, it is more challenging for developers to ask for contributions for roads, schools, health facilities etc. This work is to look primarily at brownfield land supply, with greenbelt land involving site specific viability work. It is hoped that an update on this work can be provided to this Scrutiny Committee around October time.

A Member queried industrial units being converted to housing without planning permission, and whether this is an issue that occurs in GM and something that requires wider awareness.

It was clarified that this issue had been present in Manchester with pressure put on to older office stock for conversion to residential. This can result in an Article 4 Direction being put in place to take permitted development rights away meaning that Planning Permission is required to proceed. It was noted that cases of this aren't currently widespread across GM, but that isolated cases are starting to emerge. There is concern in terms of the resulting standard of accommodation that is produced when this occurs. It was stated that there is not much that the Combined Authority can do in response to it, as it's a local planning authority responsibility.

A Member queried EV charging infrastructure, specifically how this is progressing following an initial delay, and how many charging points are being planned across the conurbation.

It was clarified that in terms of electric vehicle charging infrastructure, there is an existing number of electric charging points provided by the public sector, with further funding for 'newer generation' charging points having been bid for to add to existing stock. There is also currently a proposal of entering into contract with a preferred supplier around August to roll out an additional number of around 20-30 charging points.

A Member raised the issue of the requirement to retrofit homes in order to meet carbon reduction targets. It was highlighted that 27% of carbon emissions come from heating homes in the GM conurbation. The difficulty in tackling this issue was noted due to the fragmented nature of home ownership and tenants/occupiers. The opportunities provided by the required work to retrofit homes such as employment and upskilling was also highlighted.

It was noted that Mark Atherton is to attend the next meeting of this Scrutiny Committee to cover the green agenda and present a paper on retrofitting, these questions to be taken to the next meeting.

A Member highlighted the need for more quality housing to increase council revenue in their district of Rochdale. This issue had been highlighted to the City Mayor as the lead for Housing in GM. In terms of addressing homelessness, via homes allocation, this policy is being reviewed following council tax banding having been previously allocated incorrectly to some individuals.

RESOLVED

1. That the report and overall progress towards the achievement of the GMS 2020 ambitions and targets be noted,
2. That the updated GMS Implementation Plan and Performance Dashboard be agreed.
3. That the comments of this Committee summarised above including requests for further information be taken in to account with future reports and included in the work programme as relevant.

HPE/167/19 HOUSING FUNDING STREAMS

Steve Fyfe, Head of Housing Strategy, GMCA delivered a presentation to the Committee summarising Government housing funding programmes: The slides were subsequently circulated to Committee Members, and are available on the GMCA website with the other papers for this meeting.

Members provided the following comments and questions:

A Member enquired whether the Small Sites fund and Land Assembly Funds assist in building on land that is currently unused (such as Brownfield which could help assist district take-up quota) and clarity on the criteria for the application process.

It was clarified that this is the case, and that the Small Sites is grant funding which should assist in bringing forward smaller brownfield sites around GM. This funding can be applied for by council officers contacting Homes England with a final deadline of March 2021.

In terms of the 150 units in 40 sites, the question was asked if Members are entitled to know where these are located.

In response, it was confirmed that the schemes are approved by the Combined Authority, and that a list could be provided to Members of this Committee of the 40 sites.

A Member queried whether the GM Housing Investment Loan Fund is ring fenced for affordable schemes only in GM

It was clarified that this is not aimed at affordable schemes only, with the intention of the scheme to speed up housing delivery in general. The affordability housing element is determined by the district that the scheme is in. Each scheme needs to conform with or exceed the affordable home requirement of that local authority.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the presentation be noted.
2. That the information in relation to sites be provided for the committee

HPE/168/19 LOCAL CONCESSIONARY TRAVEL CHARGE

Steve Warrener, Finance and Corporate Services Director outlined a proposal to introduce an annual charge of £10 for 'older people' (those who qualify for English National Concessionary Scheme (ENCT) Pass) to access the local concessionary travel scheme which currently enables free travel on Metrolink and train within Greater Manchester.

Under the 2007 Act, eligible older and disabled people are entitled to free off-peak travel on all local bus (only) services anywhere in England from 9:30 until 23:30 on weekdays and all days at weekends and on Bank Holidays via the use of an ENCT pass. The Act stipulates that the travel permit for the ENCT pass must be issued free of charge. The only charge that TfGM is able to levy is to cover the cost of the replacement of lost, stolen or damaged passes. This currently stands at £10.

In addition to the national scheme ENCT, TfGM currently offer an enhanced scheme which offers free travel for older and disabled people:

- on Metrolink trams between 09:30 and midnight, Monday to Friday, and all day at weekends and on public holidays; and
- on trains on journeys scheduled to run at or after 09:30, Monday to Friday, and all day at weekends and on public holidays.

The report proposed that TfGM introduce a £10 charge per annum for older people for access to the enhanced local concessionary scheme. Should older people not wish to pay the £10 charge and opt out of the enhanced scheme they would still be entitled to free off-peak travel on all local bus services as outlined in the 2007 Act.

It was reported that to enable the continued use of the ENCTS cards in circulation, and therefore to implement the proposal at the lowest possible cost, TfGM would issue an 'entitlement product' that would be loaded on to a concessionaire's existing card once they have paid the £10 annual charge. It was highlighted that the proposal would align the charges for older people with the charges for other discretionary concessionary travel schemes in Greater Manchester.

This proposal is to be presented to the GMCA on 26th July for approval.

Members provided the following questions and comments

- Members expressed concern that the charge may present financial difficulties to some individuals from accessing their travel pass, potentially creating a barrier to take-up. It was acknowledged that the sum of £10 will not be an issue for all, but there are those that may find covering this extra charge challenging.
- A Member stated that that the older generation have already made large contributions to tax and national insurance with transport highlighted as already being funded via council tax levy.

This demographic had also been recently affected with other recent rising costs such as the removal of free TV licensing for over 75s.

- The point was made that there are reliability issues with public transport in GM, and asking for an additional payment for the current quality of service is a challenging message.
- A Member noted concern that any reduction in travel pass take-up could have detrimental health associated impacts. This includes restricting access to area based health care specialist centres and hospitals which was noted as being vital for some older people. Knock-on impacts of creating any barrier to take up of the travel pass could include Isolation leading to mental health problems.
- The point was made that this charge should be introduced with something 'positive' which may improve the reception and public perception of introducing the charge. Adding the specific benefits of what aspects of the GM bus service will be improved by introducing this was given as an example. The importance for making a case for the added value to those affected by the charge was stressed.
- A Member made the point that this charge could be offset by 'giving something back', such as lifting restrictions to free travel before 09:30.
- A Member asked around the administration cost for collecting the annual £10 fee which being a 12 month renewal rolling process could potentially have viability impacts on the return of that sum.
- A Member noted that GM should have an aspiration to promote mobility in all ages, with concern that introducing this charge is at odds with this message.
- Concern was expressed that some elderly individuals struggle with application processes, particularly with payments requiring bank details, requiring assistance with this process.
- It was noted that the report was deficient in terms of details of administration and methodology, making it challenging for Members to pass a considered opinion at this stage.
- A number of Members of this Committee wanted it stated on record that they were not in favour of implementing the Charge.

The following was given in response to Members questions and comments:

- Following Member queries around the policy of concessionary travel being restricted nationally to post 09:30 as this is not adopted in London, it was clarified that this is national policy and that London has lifted the restriction as an 'enhancement' for their constituency.
- It was clarified that the £10 Charge is not associated with bus travel which is offered nationally free to those of pension age and irrespective of opting to pay the fee. The £10 charge is only for the additional 'enhancement' transport modes which GM offers above the national offer, namely the addition of concession access to train and tram transport, as such this will not hinder those individuals who rely on bus services to access health care.
- It was stated that funding raised from the scheme is to be ring-fenced towards investment to improve and enhance bus services and to protect concessions in GM via bus reform. This is forecast to be around an additional £1.2 million funding.
- In terms of providing details of some of the proposals upfront to reinvest the revenue from this scheme back in to bus reform, due to the nature of the consultation and budget sign off process, it is not possible to present proposals of this nature at this stage, but these would be presented to Members as part of the budget process in the future subject to sign-off of this proposal.
- In relation to concerns around elderly constituents finding the annual fee renewal challenging, It was stated that TfGM have undertaken an equality impact assessment to identify and

address these issues. It was clarified that there is to be various means of paying the fee such as travel shops, or cheques.

- It was highlighted that take-up forecasts of the pass are difficult to predict for reasons such as, some individuals use the bus over tram and train anyway due to their geographical proximity.
- In relation to the question around offsetting the charge against allowing free concessionary travel before 09:30, this isn't something that had been considered
- It was clarified that the proposal is for passes to be renewed on a rolling basis, with the vast majority of estimated additional cost of the renewal process being absorbed into what TfGM are already doing with current pass renewal. The Charge is to be made in the same way as the young people persons IGO card. Although a cost-to-benefit calculation is not fully detailed, the cost is predicted to be marginal and the benefit is the £1.25 million based on 30% take up being the final figure with any administration cost already factored.
- It was clarified that TfGM can bring colleagues to future meetings of this Scrutiny to provide more operational detail of the scheme if necessary.

RESOLVED:

- That on the basis of the information in the report, the Committee do not support the current proposals to introduce a £10 per annum levy charge for older people for access to the enhanced local concessionary travel scheme and request that the comments outlined in the minutes are considered by the Combined Authority at their meeting on 26th July.

For the remainder of this meeting, this Committee was inquorate with 9 Members present

HPE/169/19 WORK PROGRAMME

Joanne Heron, Statutory Scrutiny Officer, Governance & Scrutiny Team, GMCA introduced the item. Following on from the informal briefing session of this Committee in June, the HPE Scrutiny Work Programme was drafted incorporating Member suggestions. Some of the timings of these items have subsequently changed since the initial draft was circulated to accommodate report availability

- Members to note that the Town Centre Strategy Mayoral Development Corporation item to be rescheduled from September to November
- Following Member comments the 'A Bed Every Night' item to be rearranged to be earlier in November 2019

RESOLVED/-

That with the above changes, the Work Programme be noted

HPE/170/19 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Future meeting arrangements agreed as follows:

Thursday 12th September	18:00 – 20:00
Thursday 10th October	14:00 – 16:00
Thursday 14th November	18:00 – 20:00
Thursday 5th December	18:00 – 20:00
Thursday 16th January 2020	10:30 – 11:30
Thursday 13th February 2020	14:00 – 16:00
Thursday 19th March 2020	18:00 – 20:00