

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED AUTHORITY
CORPORATE ISSUES AND REFORM OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON TUESDAY 8 DECEMBER 2020 VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS LIVE EVENT**

PRESENT:

Councillor Tim Pickstone	Bury (Chair)
Councillor John Leech	Manchester (Substitute)
Councillor Colin McLaren	Oldham
Councillor Chris Goodwin	Oldham
Councillor Kallum Nolan	Rochdale
Councillor Ray Dutton	Rochdale (Substitute)
Councillor Karen Garrido	Salford (Substitute)
Councillor David Jolley	Salford
Councillor Tanya Burch	Salford
Councillor Joanne Marshall	Wigan

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Steve Wilson	Treasurer, GMCA
Steve Warrener	Finance Director, TfGM
Joanne Heron	Statutory Scrutiny Officer, GMCA
Jamie Fallon	Senior Governor & Scrutiny Officer, GMCA

CI&R/39/20 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Beverley Fletcher (Bolton), Dave Morgan (Trafford), Dena Ryness (Stockport), John McGahan (Stockport), Teresa Smith (Tameside).

CI&R/40/20 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS AND URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair extended thanks to Councillors Karen Garrido, and Ray Dutton, and John Leach for their attendance at the meeting as a substitute.

CI&R/41/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

CI&R/42/20 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 NOVEMBER 2020

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee, held on 10 November 2020 were submitted for approval.

RESOLVED/-

That the minutes of the Committee meeting held on 10 November 2020 be approved as a correct record.

CI&R/43/20

GMCA BUDGET SETTING 2021/2022

Steve Wilson, Treasurer, GMCA, presented Members with an update on the 2021/ 2022 Budget Setting process for the Mayoral, GMCA General, and transport elements, including next steps. Steve Warrener, Finance Director, TfGM was also in attendance, to update Members on the transport budgets.

Members were advised that following a statutory change, the Committee no longer had responsibility for scrutinising the Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue (GMFRS) budgets. These, would now be considered by the Police, Crime & Fire Panel, and then submitted to the GMCA for approval in January/February 2021.

Members raised the following questions and comments:

- Has the global pandemic affected the methodology used to develop the budgets? It was confirmed that the budgets had been largely unaffected by the pandemic with most things on track, however, there had been a significant underspend on Our Pass due to patronage levels. There would be an impact on the Collection Fund, which would hit the budgets in 2021/2022. It was noted that the transport budgets had been impacted by the request from Department for Transport (DFT) that other concessionary travel continue to be paid at pre COVID rates.
- A Member requested further information regarding the deficit on the Collection Fund. It was confirmed that as with localities, the GMCA would spread any precept deficit over three years to smooth out the effects. As the GMCA was not a billing authority, district calculations will be used. The Government indicated that they would cover 75% of any unrecovered debts. A prudent approach was being taken until further information was received.
- What does the proposed 10% saving (from the £4.4m core funding) relate to, was it a reduction in headcount, or reduction of a specific project? It was confirmed that the GMCA had implemented a freeze on recruitment for 2020/21, on all but critical and externally funded posts. Linked to this, there was some recurrent savings, which could be removed from budgets, and a review was being undertaken to ensure that grants and other sources of funding, were being recharged at the appropriate level. The aim was to continue to deliver what we deliver, but more efficiently.
- Could there potentially be a reduction in the £4.7m district funding which supports the Culture and Social Fund, Midas, and Marketing Manchester? It was confirmed that further work was being undertaken to support Leaders to make a decision regarding this. It was noted that this funding mainly covered the Cultural Fund, which was a sector that had been disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

- A Member referred to a suggestion made by bus operators that the pandemic could significantly increase the cost of bus reform, and explored whether this was expected. Steve Warrener, referred to a recent report considered by the GMCA on 27 November 2020, which proposed that the costs of implementing bus reform remained largely unchanged, and could be managed within the previously agreed financial envelope. It was noted that the biggest uncertainties related to the revenue stream; whether the Government support remained at pre COVID levels, and what happened in relation to patronage levels. The report outlined mitigating responses, which could be introduced to address any shortfalls in revenue.

Steve Wilson, added that the original bus reform proposal (over a 5 year period) outlined gradual annual increases (apart from one year), which had been rephased until 2022/ 2023. Options for levelling out the increases were being considered, and sensitivity tests were currently being undertaken. It was confirmed that the one off statutory charge of £17.8m, from localities had been rephased until 2025/ 2026 (should a decision be taken on bus reform), to take account of localities' financial position.

- The Chair referred to the projected deficit on transport (£7.7m saving), which was forecasted to be addressed through efficiency savings and/or reserves. Was it presumed that bus companies would continue to be reimbursed for concessionary travel in 2021/ 2022? It was confirmed that this had been allocated in the budget.
- Further information was requested regarding the £32.7m for supported bus services, and what this included. It was confirmed that this was a combination of support for the general network, and support for school services.
- A Member sought clarification as to whether those eligible would be required to pay the annual £10 charge for concessionary travel in 2021/ 2022. It was confirmed that this would continue to be an annual contribution, and was assumed within the calculations.
- How does Metrolink feature with the Revenue Budget. Steve Warrener advised that over 10 years ago, significant borrowings had been made to support the delivery of the significant investment programme on Metrolink, and this interrelated to the core budget through the surplus generated at operating level (after Government funding). The operating surplus part funded the financing costs. The reserves were used to pay the capital interest on the debt, along with contributing to the costs for renewal of the Metrolink system over the next twenty years. It was noted that there was an interrelationship in terms of the Metrolink surplus feeding the reserve that contributed towards financing costs. In addition, Metrolink received a levy contribution relating to concessionary journeys.
- Members welcomed the update. Following consideration, it was agreed that the Capital Programme, and the Mayoral Precept proposals would be considered by the Committee in January 2021.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the presentation be received and noted.
2. That the Committee consider the Capital Programme, and Mayoral Precept proposals at its January 2021 meeting.

CI&R/44/20 WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE 2020/21 MUNICIPAL YEAR

Members considered the committee work programme for 2020/21, and the Chair agreed to liaise with the Statutory Scrutiny Officer, regarding the number of items for discussion at the January 2021 meeting, to ensure that the Committee could adequately consider each item.

RESOLVED/-

That the Chair review the number of items for consideration at the January 2021 meeting.

CI&R/45/20 GMCA REGISTER OF KEY DECISIONS

RESOLVED/-

That the GMCA Register of Key Decisions be noted.

CI&R/46/20 DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

All meetings would be held virtually on the following dates at 4.00 pm:

- 19 January 2021
- 9 February 2021
- 16 March 2021