

**MEETING OF THE GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED AUTHORITY (GMCA)
ECONOMY, BUSINESS GROWTH AND SKILLS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE FRIDAY 5th FEBRUARY 2021 AT 10.30 AM VIA WEBCAST**

Present: Councillor Michael Holly
Bolton: Councillor Samantha Connor
Councillor Susan Haworth
Bury: Councillor Mary Whitby
Manchester: Councillor Basat Sheikh
Councillor Greg Stanton
Oldham: Councillor George Hulme
Rochdale: Councillor Michael Holly (in the Chair)
Councillor Daniel Meredith
Salford: Councillor Jim King
Stockport: Councillor Becky Senior
Tameside: Councillor Stephen Homer
Trafford: Councillor Barry Brotherton
Wigan: Councillor Charles Rigby
Councillor Michael Winstanley

In attendance:-

Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester
Councillor Elise Wilson, GM Lead Member for Economy and
Business.

Officers in attendance:-

GMCA Joanne Heron, Statutory Scrutiny Officer
GMCA John Wrathmell, Director of Strategy, GMCA
GMCA Kevin Lee, Director GM Mayor's Office
GMCA Amy Fooks, Strategy, GMCA
GMCA Lindsay Dunn, Governance and Scrutiny, GMCA
GMCA Paul Harris, Governance and Scrutiny, GMCA

E64/20

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Kerry Waters and from Simon Nokes

E65/20

CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS AND URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business reported.

E66/20

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

E67/20 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4th DECEMBER 2020

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee, held on 4th December 2020 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

The Chair noted that Councillor Susan Howarth was in attendance and had contributed to the discussions at the meeting.

RESOLVED/-

That the minutes of meeting of the Economy, Business Growth and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee, held on 4th December 2020, be approved as a correct record, subject to the inclusion of Councillor Susan Haworth in the list of Members present.

E68/20 LIVING WITH COVID RESILIENCE PLAN UPDATE

Members considered a report which, provided them with an update on the implementation of the Living with Covid Resilience Plan and the development of mechanisms to drive system change in order to better respond to environmental and equalities impacts arising. An update of progress against the Greater Manchester Strategy headline outcome measures was also provided.

The Mayor of Greater Manchester highlighted a number of key points:-

- It was noted that the one year living with Covid plan remains flexible in order to adapt to emerging issues such as different waves and new strains of the virus.
- A Government statement on the way forward and the release of lockdown is anticipated to be made on 22 February 2021. It was noted that discussions were taking place to develop a Greater Manchester view on any proposals. GM would resist any return to the tier system as a release from the current lockdown restrictions. The Mayor noted that releasing restriction for short periods will only damage the economy further and a clearer route-map for the sustainable opening businesses is needed to support the GM economy. It was suggested that a national, phased release from lockdown, starting with the re-opening of schools and colleges, would be a sensible approach.
- The vaccination programme is progressing well in Greater Manchester. It was noted that to date, in excess of 450k vaccines have been administered. Tributes were paid to the efforts of NHS staff and district councils for delivering this programme. Members also noted that the region is on course to offer the vaccine to all residents in the top four priority groups by mid-February.
- In terms of containing the virus, the Mayor highlighted the need for greater financial support for those people required to self-isolate.
- The damage to the GM economy is more profound than in other regions. The furlough scheme, although welcomed, is masking future job losses when the scheme ends.
- A focus for recovery is needed. The local industrial strategy will form an important part for GM economy recovery. The potential to invest in the green economy will help to create a number of long-term employment opportunities.

- The Mayor highlighted that even before Covid, some residents in parts of GM have a lower life expectancy than other parts of the country. The risk to these groups to Covid should be noted and allowances made in the vaccination programme.
- Inequality also remains an issue that needs to be addressed. Plans are being developed to address this.

Comments and questions:

- A Member referenced a recent study on remote and homeworking by neighbourhood deprivation. It was noted that 50% of homeworking change is taking place in affluent areas and just 8% in deprived areas. The Member asked what GM's plan will be to respond to this inequality. In response, it was noted that Covid has accentuated divide and inequality. Work to understand this inequality is needed in order to develop a plan to provide support for people. It was also noted that this is an opportunity to improve employment for all with the development of the Good Employment Charter and wider digital inclusion. An independent Inequalities Commission has been asked to explore this further.
- A Member noted reports that the national economy had reduced by 4% and asked if GM has a comparative level of reduction to its economy. The Member also enquired about measures for testing and quarantining of visitors through Manchester Airport and the consequential impact this ruling will have on the Airport and the region's hotels. The Member also highlighted that figures from Credit Union organisations had identified inequalities with higher rates of arrears and payment holidays. The Member highlighted a case study where an individual had been contacted by and visited by a number of public service agencies with no real change to the individuals circumstance. A more joined up approach was needed. In response, the Mayor explained that is no clear route map for the return of aviation and without any return plan, the Airport will continue to face significant challenges. There is suitable hotel capacity at the Airport to support the quarantine requirements. In terms of multi-agency support, it was noted that the 10 GM districts have been working together on these issues. The one year living with Covid plan highlighted the benefits of the creation of neighbourhood community hubs. From a homelessness point of view, the Mayor explained that the approach of providing support upfront had created more sustainable outcomes and as a result, less demand on the public purse for crisis spending. The Housing First programme has allowed people to sustain tenancies.
- Members noted that in terms of the economy, data on the full lockdown impact is not yet available. It was noted that of the indicators available, the movement of people in the city region has suggests that the fall in travelling to workplaces is not as severe as in previous lockdowns. Claimant rates have now plateaued but there remains some concern as to the impact the ending of furlough scheme will have.
- In terms of Safer and Stronger Communities, as set out in the report, a Member asked what the Mayor can do to re-establish public confidence following the placement of GM Police in to special measures, for the region to have safe and strong communities in the post Covid world. In response, the Mayor explained that analysis was taking place on root cause of GMP's performance. The impact of cuts to 2000 GM Police front line staff resulted in performance and capacity issues. These staffing reductions occurred at a time of significant operation

pressures which included fraud, terrorism and child sexual exploitation. The Mayor also highlighted that the implementation of these cuts resulted in the loss of higher numbers of experienced senior officers. The retrenchment of resources and a defensive culture also contributed. In GM, 600 new police officers have been recruited and there are plans to recruit with a further 395 new officers. The Mayor highlighted that accountability is also to foster public confidence. For this reason, arrangements have been made for named, contactable neighbourhood police officers. An action plan is being developed to address these challenges.

- A Member highlighted the issue of food inequality across the conurbation. He suggested investment in food cooperatives to allow for food fairness in all neighbourhoods. In response, the Mayor highlighted the significant work taking place in district to support these initiatives. The No Child Goes Hungry initiative provides access to food in school holidays and is supported by the Cooperative Group. It was noted that 600 prepaid food cards had been handed out to each Borough. A food network in each borough will help to address food poverty. He highlighted the lobbying work taking place by Fans Support Foodbanks to influence the Governments Food Strategy. The call is for the right for food to be included in Law. A paper on this matter is to be considered by GMCA on 12 February.
- A Member highlighted the need to meet GM residents' basic needs. The Member asked if there were any plans to unlock funds for local spending to support the local economy. The Member also raised the matter of digital inclusion for older residents and what can be done to help support their digital needs. In response, the Mayor highlighted how public procurement can support local businesses. He also noted discussion taken place at the GM Local Enterprise Partnership in relation to the creation of a local Amazon style platform to signpost procurement to local suppliers. The Mayor noted work has taken place in relation to digital inclusion with the Disability Panel and as part of the one-year plan. Discussion was continuing with major ICT providers and GM has an ambition to have all GM citizens to have the capability to be online.
- A Member noted safety concerns raised by the TUC in relation to employees being asked to attend workplaces even if they are able to work from home. The Mayor noted that in the first lockdown a number of complaints were received from works regarding their workplaces and were acted up on. The Mayor suggested that regulations need to be stronger and noted that the Health and Safety Executive should have greater involvement.
- In respect of the vaccination programme, a Member asked if there has been any noticeable number of people refusing vaccines and what work is taking place to address any misinformation relating to the vaccine programme. In response, the Mayor highlighted unfounded messaging in circulation regarding the vaccine. He added that there is evidence that take up in certain parts of the Asian and BME communities is potentially lower. Work is taking place to build up confidence in these areas and providing suitable information to support the vaccination programme. In addition, vaccine refusal data has been sought and an approach to reach these individuals, potentially through a GP call, is being considered.
- A Member welcomed that Manchester City Council recently became a Right to Food City and hoped that this approach becomes a GM wide right. The Member also highlighted the excellent response from emergency services and

communities to support people affected by recent flooding. He extended an invitation to the Mayor to visit West Didsbury where flooding was particularly bad. In response, and accepting the invitation, the Mayor highlighted the important role of councils to respond effectively to emergencies, particularly at a time of challenge in terms of the pandemic and resources. He undertook to bring a representative from the Environment Agency to visit West Didsbury.

- A Member highlighted the importance of skills to create opportunities for GM young people. He also identified inequalities that have to be addressed, particularly the academic under performance of white young males from poorer areas. In response, the Mayor highlighted how the greater devolvement of post 16 education will allow for colleges to support links between education and businesses. A Greater Manchester Apprenticeships and Careers Service portal has been established to show opportunities. The free travel for 16-18-year olds also helps for young people to access opportunities.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the progress made over the first quarter delivery and the overall progress of the Living with Covid Resilience Plan, be noted.

E69/20 GREATER MANCHESTER LOCAL INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY - IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE AND 2021 PRIORITIES

Members received a presentation which will provide an update on the implementation of the GM Local Industrial Strategy set out those priorities for 2021. In addition, the presentation gave an overview of the progress made in 2019 – 2020, the Impact of COVID-19, and thematic highlights and key actions.

It was noted that the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) remains an important strategy as an economic response to the current economic crisis and long terms plans for prosperity in GM and is supported by GM LEP.

Comments and questions raised: -

- A Member highlighted that the LIS should be viewed as joint work with the Government to support the economy and asked if the Government had offered any support to the LIS. The Member also enquired if local companies can use the employability programme? In response, it was noted that GM is committed to working in partnership with the Government on the LIS. This has included the joint innovation partnership on Healthy Ageing Resource support. It was also noted that local joint working is taking place with DWP. The requirement for 30 Kickstart applicants has been removed by Government.
- A Member asked if the halting of the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF) will impact on the work and aspirations of the LIS. In response, it was noted that the ambitions of the LIS remain. It is crucial for space to be available for GM businesses to expand in to. It was noted that planning applications continued to be received for business sites across Greater Manchester and that work is taking place at pace to develop a plan in both Stockport and the other 9 districts.

- A Member noted working pattern changes with more people home working. He suggested that the LIS can present opportunities but must be flexible to allow future changes to take place. In response, it was noted that plans needed to be able to be reviewed and refreshed in order for plans to remain relevant. A resilient approach is also needed to support life-long learning and for people to take advantage of new opportunities. The ambition to see all areas of the city region flourish remains and the towns and cities agenda continues to receive Government support.

RESOLVED/-

That the update on the Local Industrial Strategy be noted.

**E70/20 GREATER MANCHESTER PREPARATIONS FOR EU EXIT AND
UPDATED ANALYSIS ON POSSIBLE ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS**

A report was presented which provided Members with an update on the co-ordination of activities undertaken across Greater Manchester to prepare for the end of the transition period was considered. The report gave an overview of the current position regarding Greater Manchester activity around the international strategy and EU funding update. Finally, the report included a detailed analysis of possible economic impacts arising from Brexit.

Comments and questions:-

- A Member highlighted that there was still no understanding of what will replace the Erasmus Scheme. The Member highlighted that GM is more reliant on exports to the EU than other parts of the UK and enquired what can be done to address this. The new requirement for documentary processes for exports was highlighted as having a negative impact for businesses. In response it was noted that the Growth Company continues to provide support for businesses.
- A Member asked if maintaining and growing the broad sectoral business base of the GM economy still a top priority. If so, how does this relate to the 8 priorities of the Implementation place – namely, trade investment international students, visitor economy, research partnerships, connectivity, reputation and promotion and city region diplomacy. In response, it was noted that the priorities referenced were still relevant and important to support the people of Greater Manchester and their employment opportunities. Part of this work includes attracting inward investment and the development of talent pipelines. It was also noted that the pandemic had shown the value of green spaces and local neighbourhood assets.
- A Member highlighted that in relation to the International Strategy, GM should be proud of its achievements. The digital platform for to support Health and Social Care has been a key achievement. In addition, learning from other city regions and countries is something that GM must continue to do.
- A Member highlighted concerns in relation to the shared prosperity fund. He asked if 2020 figures will be included in an updated future report. In response, it was noted that trading data from Office of National Statistics has a significant time lag and is over 12 months old. For this reason, the information provided by the Growth Company provides a valuable resource.

- A Member suggested that in relation to the Erasmus scheme, former overseas students that have studied in GM may be useful contacts to help support. The forging of relationships will be of benefit.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the work underway by the Greater Manchester Brexit Readiness Group to understand the impacts arising from EU exit and to coordinate responses across the city-region, as set out in the report, be noted.
2. That the work underway on the Greater Manchester International Strategy and ongoing partnership working with EU nations to develop Greater Manchester opportunities in the future, be noted.
3. That the update provided regarding EU funding sources, be noted.
4. That refreshed economic analysis undertaken and possible implications for the Greater Manchester economy, be noted.

E71/20 REGISTER OF KEY DECISIONS

Members considered the register of key decisions.

RESOLVED/-

To note the Register of GMCA Key Decisions for the period 1 December 2020 to 28 February 2021.

E72/20 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2020-2021

Members considered the Committee Work Programme which proposed future items to be scrutinised by the committee for the remainder of the municipal year.

RESOLVED/-

That the Committee Work programme be noted.

E73/20 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED/-

The next meeting of this Committee will be held on Friday 12 March 2021, commencing at 10:30 am, be noted. The meeting will be conducted by live web stream.