

Appendix 8 – Consultation Approach and Methodology

1 OVERARCHING METHODOLOGY AND STATUTORY FRAMEWORK

1.1 Background

1.1.1 The consultation on the Assessment took place across two periods. When referring to the first consultation this is in reference to the first consultation period and when referring to the second consultation this is referring to the second consultation period.

1.1.2 The following content sets out the approach and methodology for the delivery of the consultations aligned to the scope for each:

- First consultation – the purpose of this consultation was to seek views from consultees on whether the Proposed Franchising Scheme should be made, with or without modification.
- Second consultation – the purpose of this consultation was to allow consultees to provide their views on the Assessment in light of the findings of the Covid Impact Report and to provide their views on whether or not the Proposed Franchising Scheme should be introduced.

1.1.3 The methodology and approach for the consultations is set out in the following reports:

- On 7 October 2019, a report went to GMCA setting out and explaining the recommendation to the GMCA to approve proceeding to the next stage in the consideration of a Proposed Franchising Scheme, and included details of the approach and costs for consultation:
<https://democracy.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/documents/s2369/CA%20Bus%20Reform.pdf>
- On 11 June 2020, a report went to the Housing, Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee providing an update on the approach, methodology and outputs of the consultation following its close:
<https://democracy.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/documents/s7873/HPEOS%20Bus%20Reform%20Consultation%20Report%20June%202020%20FINAL.pdf>
- On 27 November 2020, a report went to GMCA introducing the Covid-19 Impact Report and recommended the approach for the second consultation: <https://democracy.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/documents/s10627/9%20GMCA%20bus%20report%20Nov20%20final.pdf>

1.2 Delivery arrangements

1.2.1 GMCA instructed TfGM to conduct the consultations on its behalf. Ipsos MORI – an independent opinion research agency – was appointed to receive, manage, process and analyse the responses to the consultations; to undertake qualitative research on the proposals (a research method of facilitated sessions to seek feedback from representative groups); and to produce reports for GMCA on these findings.

1.2.2 TfGM worked closely with the 10 GM Councils during the consultation periods, to utilise appropriate channels and networks for reaching Greater Manchester residents and businesses.

1.3 Legal requirements and best practice

1.3.1 GMCA had regard to common law principles governing all consultations, which requires that:

- Consultations should occur when proposals are at a formative stage;
- Consultations should give sufficient reasons for any proposal to permit intelligent consideration;
- Consultations should allow adequate time for consideration and response; and
- The product of consultation must be conscientiously taken into account.

1.3.2 The consultations were also delivered in accordance with GMCA's established principles, in particular:

- Taking into consideration existing consultation best practice and working in parallel to national guidance and other common law and statutory requirements, including the Equality Act;
- Ensuring documents are accessible to all consultees, including the provision of printed consultation materials in public buildings and that all documentation is published online;
- Providing appropriate response mechanisms that facilitate both digital and non-digital consultation responses; and
- Ensuring that the consultation is inclusive to Greater Manchester's diverse population, accessible to audiences with protected characteristics and offers opportunities to directly engage with the process in each of the ten local authority areas, supported by an Equality Impact Assessment.

1.3.3 For the second consultation period, these principles were considered in light of ongoing GM tier three and national lockdowns and associated restrictions as a consequence of Covid-19. It was recognised that any consultation conducted in a time of Covid-19-related restrictions would be different to previous consultations; all activity was therefore planned and delivered to ensure that as far as possible the consultation was fair and met best practice guidance for consultation and engagement. More details on this is set out below.

1.4 Consultees

1.4.1 Section 123E(4) of the Act lists categories of organisations and individuals with whom GMCA was required to consult.

1.4.2 These groups are outlined below:

- **All bus operators running local services in Greater Manchester.** TfGM records identified 66 bus operators in this group.
- **All other persons holding a PSV operator's licence or community bus permit who would be affected by the proposed scheme.**
- **Such persons who appear to represent employees of bus operators running local services in Greater Manchester.** GMCA and TfGM identified nine bodies and contacted the General Secretary for each.
- **Such organisations appearing to represent bus passengers.** Transport Focus are specified below; GMCA and TfGM identified two further organisations as appearing to fall within this category – Travel Watch North West and Bus Users UK.
- **A Traffic Commissioner.** GMCA and TfGM identified the Traffic Commissioner for the North West and Wales as the relevant consultee.
- **The Chief Constable of Greater Manchester Police.**
- **The Passengers' Council** (which is now known as Transport Focus).
- **The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA).**
- **Any other relevant local authority whose area would be affected by the proposed scheme.** In addition to the 10 Greater Manchester Councils, GMCA and TfGM sought to identify all local authorities who may be affected by the proposed franchising scheme. This includes neighbouring local authorities where local services operate in and out of Greater Manchester. 23 neighbouring local authorities were identified across Lancashire, Merseyside, Cheshire, Derbyshire and West Yorkshire.

- 1.4.3 In addition to these groups, GMCA invited responses from other specific groups: OneBus, a group which represents Bus Operators in Greater Manchester, and local campaign group Better Buses for Greater Manchester.
- 1.4.4 Responses were also sought from the general public – including both bus users and non-bus users; stakeholders including businesses, voluntary and community sector organisations and other institutions; elected representatives and other interested parties.

2 CONSULTATION METHODOLOGY FOR THE FIRST CONSULTATION PERIOD

- 2.1.1 The first consultation period commenced on 14 October 2019 and closed on 8 January 2020. A statutory notice was prepared on consultation launch and was published on GMCA’s website and in local newspapers. This was accompanied by wider publication on GMCA channels and in the media.

2.2 Consultation documentation and questions

- 2.2.1 All consultation documentation was published on 14 October 2019 online and can still be viewed at www.gmconsult.org.uk (see closed activities). Hard copies of the documentation were sent to each statutory consultee and placed in public buildings across Greater Manchester.
- 2.2.2 Consultation documentation included the consultation document, the assessment of a proposed franchising scheme, a number of supporting papers and the draft Equality Impact Assessment on the Proposed Franchising Scheme. All documentation was accessible online with screen readers and a guide was produced and published to assist.
- 2.2.3 The main consultation document was prepared in accordance with the Act and set out why GMCA believes the Proposed Franchising Scheme is the best way to meet its strategic objectives, and provided a summary of the assessment, consultation questions, how and when responses to the consultation could be received, and where to obtain further information. The document also included a description of the Proposed Franchising Scheme, including the area to which the scheme relates; a description of local services proposed to be included and excluded in the proposed scheme; and the dates it was proposed the scheme would be made. The appendices to the document contained the auditor’s report, auditor’s observations and TfGM’s response to these, as well as the scheme itself.
- 2.2.4 Questions to be asked as part of the consultation are not prescribed in the Act and Guidance. Consultation questions were therefore developed with external legal advisors to meet consultation requirements and the outcomes of the Act, and to support respondents to provide their views on both the Proposed Franchising Scheme and the assessment.

- 2.2.5 These consultation questions were embedded throughout the consultation document and in two questionnaires – a short version containing nine questions and a long version containing 48 questions, including those in the short questionnaire.
- 2.2.6 Both questionnaires were designed around the core elements of the proposals to assist respondents in understanding the consultation requirements:
- The Proposed Franchising Scheme;
 - The five Cases of the assessment (Strategic, Economic, Commercial, Financial and Management) and their impact. The short questionnaire did not include questions about the Commercial and Management Cases;
 - The draft Equality Impact Assessment; and
 - General support or opposition for the introduction of the Proposed Franchising Scheme, any recommended changes to it, and any further comments.
- 2.2.7 In order to obtain as much detailed feedback on the Proposed Franchising Scheme as possible at the time, the majority of the consultation questions were asked as open questions. Two closed questions were included in both the long and short questionnaire asking respondents to provide the extent to which they agreed with GMCA’s reasons for reforming the bus market and the level of support for the introduction of the Proposed Franchising Scheme.
- 2.2.8 A full list of the consultation questions can be found in Appendix 1 of the First Consultation Document.
- 2.2.9 There was no requirement for respondents to answer either questionnaire in order to participate in the consultation. Consultation materials and publicity confirmed that responses by email or letter would also be accepted. Respondents could therefore respond by online response form, hard copy questionnaire (which could be returned to a freepost address), by email to a dedicated consultation email address, or by writing to a freepost address.
- 2.2.10 Although a ‘digital first’ approach was undertaken, it was ensured that the consultation was fully accessible. Hard copies of all documents including questionnaires were available in 148 locations across Greater Manchester. Large print versions of the consultation document and leaflet were also produced. A dedicated phonenumber was established for the consultation period to answer queries which also offered a ‘LanguageLine’ service to support non-English speakers. Consultation responses could also be provided via the phonenumber.
- 2.3 **Awareness raising and engagement activity: statutory consultees**
- 2.3.1 All statutory consultees were sent a hard copy of all consultation documentation via courier with a covering letter providing contact details for TfGM staff to obtain further information about the consultation and proposals, including an offer to

arrange to meet TfGM officers. Details of information sessions held with statutory consultees are set out below.

- 2.3.2 In addition, the GMCA/TfGM Chief Executive sent a letter to all statutory consultees at the mid-way point during the consultation to confirm the response deadline and to encourage consultees to respond by this deadline. This letter was supplemented by emails and phone calls for those statutory consultees for whom TfGM held email addresses and telephone numbers.

Meetings with statutory consultees

Bus operators

- 2.3.3 Bus operators (as well as OneBus, who was not a statutory consultee but is the organisation appointed to represent the views of the majority of the bus operators in Greater Manchester) were invited to a briefing on 17 October 2019. The purpose of this briefing was to provide an overview of the consultation process, including the materials provided and how to respond. Attendees were advised that the purpose of the session was to provide information and not to obtain responses to the consultation. The following operators were represented:

- Arriva North West
- D&G Bus
- Diamond Bus
- First Manchester
- Go North West Ltd
- Jim Stones Coaches
- Manchester Community Transport
- Nexus Move
- Rotala Plc
- Stagecoach Manager
- Stagecoach Merseyside & South Lancashire (Glenvale Transport Ltd)
- Transdev Blazefield
- Warrington's Own Buses (Warrington Borough Transport)

Groups representing employees

Unite the Union, Manchester

2.3.4 On 12 December 2019, senior TfGM officers met with Unite representatives regarding the possible introduction of a 'Greater Manchester Bus Franchising Minimum Standards Charter' in the event of bus franchising being introduced in Greater Manchester. A further meeting between the Mayor of Greater Manchester and Richard O'Brien, Unite Workplace Rep for Stagecoach, took place on 19 December 2019.

Competition and Markets Authority (CMA)

2.3.5 On 13 November 2019, senior TfGM officers met with the Assistant Director at the CMA. Further queries were sent from the CMA to the Executive Director (Bus Reform) at TfGM on 28 November 2019 to request further detail on:

- The pattern of usage of 'period' tickets;
- Routes/analysis about the relative 'dominance' of different operators on either side of the city centre; and
- Whether any discussions have taken place with operators on overlapping routes charging different fares and whether this has been assessed across the network.

2.3.6 A response was sent to these queries on 16 December 2019.

Local Authorities

2.3.7 TfGM Officers met with officers from Wigan and Manchester Councils during the consultation period to answer questions about the assessment and Proposed Franchising Scheme. Briefing sessions were also held for Councillors in Greater Manchester during the first half of the consultation period.

2.4 Public awareness and engagement activity: local passengers, the public and stakeholders

2.4.1 GMCA and TfGM developed a comprehensive communications and engagement plan to raise awareness of and encourage participation during the consultation period using a range of channels. This activity was designed to ensure that as many people as possible knew about the consultation, the reasons why GMCA were consulting on the Proposed Franchising Scheme and the Scheme itself, how to participate in the consultation and where to obtain the information to do so.

2.4.2 The public awareness and engagement activity was designed to reach Greater Manchester residents, business and organisations, and those in the wider travel to work area in partnership with Greater Manchester local authorities. A range of channels and approaches were developed to reach as many Greater Manchester residents as possible, taking into account demographic and accessibility issues including age, ethnicity and digital access.

2.4.3 Free channels such as GMCA, TfGM, local authority and public sector social media channels, websites, newsletters, magazines and emails to existing databases were

used to raise awareness amongst engaged audiences. Paid channels including outdoor media, digital, radio, print and social media advertising were also used to increase reach and penetration, whilst earned channels, including media engagement and community engagement, were supported by paid media to increase reach amongst specific communities and audiences. Those without digital access were engaged through outdoor and print advertising, print editorial, public information events and hard copies of leaflets were distributed in public buildings and to community groups.

2.4.4 A suite of communications and engagement materials was created to raise awareness of the consultation and to encourage people to visit the dedicated consultation webpage. Materials included a leaflet, posters, an animation with audio and subtitles, and social media templates with messages linking to www.gmconsult.org. Creative was produced for outdoor spaces (billboards, bus shelters, interchanges tram stops, free bus and variable messaging signs along busy roads), radio and print use with a simple call to action to visit the GM Consult website. This resulted in the following activity across channels:

- Over 50.5k visits to www.gmconsult.org during the consultation period. Direct searches to the webpage – driven by people typing it directly into a search engine – delivered the highest number of visits throughout the consultation – with 8.5k visits in total.
- Organic social media content led to 5.1m impressions (i.e. the number of times the content was seen on screen) on GMCA and TfGM Twitter accounts and 23k impressions on GMCA and TfGM Facebook accounts.
- Digital advertising, which could be monitored and weighted throughout the consultation period in line with response rates, delivered 6.6m impressions and 9.3k clicks (i.e. from the advert through to the consultation webpage), with adverts reaching 2.3m individual people. Digital press adverts delivered 3.2m impressions and 19.3k clicks.
- Paid social delivered nearly 5.9m impressions. Facebook delivered an overall audience reach of 1.29m with 15.8k link clicks. The total reach, including Instagram was over 2m. Monitoring of Facebook in particular saw the most engaged audience throughout the consultation period were aged 65+, though in the first two bursts of activity the 55-64 age group were most engaged. Men also drove the highest volume of link clicks, with 8.3k compared to 7.2k from women.
- Paid search provided an easy way for people to access the survey. Using keywords around buses in general also enhanced awareness via impressions. The benefit of this is that only clicks were paid for. The rate of people going through to the consultation webpage – referred to as Click Thru Rates (CTR) – on consultation keywords were over 60%.
- GMCA and TfGM databases, newsletters and magazines drove over 6k clicks to the GM Consult webpage.

- 140 pieces of coverage for the consultation appeared in the Greater Manchester and transport trade press. Coverage appeared in all ten Greater Manchester districts.
- Outdoor ads consisted of roadside advertising, bus rears and use of two digital screens in high footfall areas. In total, this activity delivered 24m impressions, with bus rear adverts delivering 6.8m impacts.
- Radio adverts delivered an estimated 17.5m impressions/impacts (i.e. the number of times the advert could have been heard) with a 1.8m reach. Predominantly Capital and Smooth were used as this combination allowed for good reach but also ran some activity with Asian Sound. Spotify was used to reach the younger audience, targeting people aged 15-24 in Greater Manchester.
- To ensure sure the districts and cross boundary areas were reached, some regional press in local titles were ran, including the Bolton Evening News, Wigan Observer and Bury Times, Burnley Express and Lancashire Evening Post. Additional targeted coverage included Able Magazine, Asian Image and Asian Leader. There was also a half page advert in North West Business Insider.
- A partnership was entered into with Reach. This package included print, digital and their programmatic offering which allowed access their regional titles as well as the Manchester Evening News. The digital elements were used to support response rates in certain areas, with 33.6% of inventory being directed to those boroughs for display and a third more impressions sent through programmatically to those regions, as well producing an estimated readership of 6.5m people.

2.4.5 Levels of participation and reach were monitored throughout the consultation period, to evaluate the effectiveness of activity, as well as assessing any need to modify the approach. This included the overall response rate and demographic breakdown of respondents, as well as levels of engagement, visibility and awareness, as demonstrated within the bullet points above.

2.4.6 All consultation documentation, leaflets and questionnaires were deposited in 148 town halls, libraries and community centres in the 10 Greater Manchester Local Authority areas for members of the public. The list of these public buildings was included in the consultation document and published on the consultation webpages.

2.4.7 Leaflets and posters were delivered to a further 450 community buildings across Greater Manchester including doctors' surgeries, health centres, children's centres and community hubs.

Public Information Events and Drop-In Sessions

2.4.8 In addition to communications activity, direct engagement through events and community engagement was undertaken to increase awareness of the consultation with members of the general public. Where 'interactions' are referenced below this

refers to contact with an individual, ranging from the provision of a leaflet to providing an overview of the consultation.

- 2.4.9 Direct engagement included a series of public information events during the consultation period, the purpose of which was to raise awareness of the consultation, inform the public about where they could find more information, how they could respond and encourage responses. These events did not seek to elicit feedback on the proposals.
- 2.4.10 21 public information events were held in total across the 10 Greater Manchester local authority areas during the consultation period.
- 2.4.11 Information events were held in areas of high footfall and visibility close to public buildings and transport hubs. A total number of 3,036 interactions were recorded across these events.
- 2.4.12 Seven events were held in neighbouring authorities in bus interchanges and areas with high footfall to ensure people who use cross-border bus services and travel into Greater Manchester were aware of the consultation. 318 interactions were recorded at these events.
- 2.4.13 Ten public drop-in events (one in each local authority area) were held at community centres and libraries. These events, which were advertised online and in local newspapers, were to provide the opportunity for more detailed face-to-face discussions regarding the consultation and proposals. They did not seek to elicit feedback on the proposals.
- 2.4.14 Although these events had a lower engagement (285 total interactions), they provided a forum for those with a particular interest or need, allowing more time to discuss specific issues in detail and in person, rather than in writing. Discussion points raised during these sessions related to feedback on current bus services in the main, as well as some on the Proposed Franchising Scheme and consultation process.
- 2.4.15 In addition to the above, a further 18 public information events were held in public buildings, engaging with people as they used the services on offer, as well as handing out leaflets at the nearby transport facility. 453 interactions were recorded at these events and 553 leaflets were distributed at interchanges and stations.

Targeted Communications and Engagement Activity

- 2.4.16 A range of activity was undertaken to encourage responses from hard to reach groups and those with protected characteristics.
- 2.4.17 GMCA and TfGM worked with communication and engagement teams in each of the ten local authority areas to promote participation through their networks. This led to a series of meetings with voluntary sector and community groups across Greater Manchester to help build awareness of the consultation and encourage responses from people with protected characteristics of age, disability, race, religion, gender,

and sexuality. These meetings did not seek to elicit feedback on the proposals and groups were encouraged to respond through the formal channels.

- 2.4.18 Hard copies of the consultation documents were also provided to groups on request. 873 interactions were logged through this community engagement activity.
- 2.4.19 The activity was monitored throughout the consultation period and reviewed alongside the response demographics to ensure it was being targeted in the most appropriate way. A summary of the activity is set out below and details of meetings are included in Appendix C of the 11 June 2020 Housing, Planning, Environment Overview Scrutiny Committee report.

Groups representing younger and older people

- 2.4.20 Extensive activity was undertaken to engage with groups representing the interests of younger and older people. This was supported with paid media targeting on social channels for these audiences.
- 2.4.21 Groups such as Age UK branches, the Age Friendly Manchester Assembly and the Older People's Network supported reach and engagement with communities of older people in each Greater Manchester borough. A targeted series of print advertising also ran in publications outside of central Manchester to reach this age group.
- 2.4.22 A wide variety of youth organisations were approached, such as the Youth Combined Authority and Youth Focus North West. Emails were circulated to the following Student Unions: Bolton, MMU, Salford and University of Manchester. University of Manchester Students' Union were particularly engaged and requested a meeting which took place with four of their elected student officers. They went on to share messaging encouraging participation in the consultation with their networks.

Disability groups

- 2.4.23 Extensive work was undertaken to engage with organisations representing a range of disabilities.
- 2.4.24 Organisations engaged to raise awareness of the consultation amongst their members included Breakthrough UK – Disability Design Reference Group, Manchester Deaf Centre, Manchester Disabled People's Access Group, Greater Manchester Autism Consortium, Greater Manchester Travel Training Forum, Henshaws, Bury Blind Society and Disability Stockport.
- 2.4.25 Accessible information and response channels included large print versions of the consultation documents and giving feedback via telephone.

Ethnic minority groups

- 2.4.26 TfGM worked with Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisation (GMCVO) to identify existing BAME networks, and the Caribbean and African Health Network

(CAHN) to support engagement with a range of community groups across Greater Manchester.

2.4.27 As well as outreach at a Greater Manchester level, this approach provided opportunities for more localised engagement, for example with the Pakistani Community Centre in Oldham, and the Stockport and Bolton branches of the African and Caribbean Association.

2.4.28 A targeted advertising campaign was also run on Asian Sounds, which reaches around 500k Asian listeners across the North West, broadcasting in a number of languages including Urdu and Hindi.

Religious groups

2.4.29 Engagement with a range of religious communities was facilitated through the Greater Manchester Faith Leaders Group which includes representation from the following religious communities: Church of England, Catholic Church, Methodist Church, Salvation Army, Christian Way of Life Churches, Baptist Church, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Zoroastrian.

2.4.30 Through these leaders, introductions were then made to smaller faith-specific groups within the districts of Greater Manchester.

Groups representing women

2.4.31 Officers engaged with the Women's Institute as well as groups representing women of specific faiths and ethnicities.

2.4.32 Both paid social media advertising and digital display advertising were reviewed during the consultation period and targeting was changed to topics and sites likely to be of interest to women.

Groups representing LGBTQ people

2.4.33 In partnership with GMCA, a meeting with the LGBT panel was facilitated to raise awareness of the consultation. Engagement with relevant networks was also sought through the LGBT Foundation and a meeting took place with the Director of The Proud Trust. Meetings and events also took place with smaller LGBT groups in the city-region.

Elected Representatives

2.4.34 Councillors and MPs in Greater Manchester and those representing neighbouring authorities were invited to respond to the consultation.

2.4.35 11 Member briefing sessions were held across nine local authority areas over the course of the consultation period about the proposed franchising scheme and to encourage them to raise awareness of the consultation amongst those they represent. 174 Councillors attended these sessions.

- 2.4.36 Communication toolkits were issued to all Greater Manchester councils, Greater Manchester MPs and Members of Greater Manchester Transport Committee (GMTC) to promote participation amongst their constituents.

Business

- 2.4.37 Business representative bodies such as the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses and Greater Manchester Local Enterprise Partnership (GMLEP) were engaged to raise awareness of the consultation amongst their members and to respond on their behalf.
- 2.4.38 Digital toolkits were provided for these bodies to share with their networks. These included news articles and suggested social media posts driving people to the consultation webpages to find out more.
- 2.4.39 Engagement was also undertaken with Chamber of Commerce bodies in neighbouring authority areas to request that they raise awareness of and encourage responses to the consultation. They were provided with a toolkit to share information in their newsletters and social channels.
- 2.4.40 A total of 194 interactions were logged through business engagement activity.

Other sectors and interest groups

- 2.4.41 Activity was undertaken with other campaign and interest groups relating to transport, community/place, the environment, education, health and the third sector. These organisations were contacted by email or letter at a Greater Manchester, regional and national level as appropriate.
- 2.4.42 Work was undertaken with organisations in the health and social care sector to engage with both staff and patients. Executives of Greater Manchester NHS Trusts were notified of the consultation and, via the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP), Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) received toolkits to share information. A wide range of health groups, including Healthwatch branches, also received the toolkit, which encouraged them to share information on their social channels. In addition to this, events were hosted in two Greater Manchester hospitals.
- 2.4.43 In the education sector, Vice-Chancellors of each of the Greater Manchester universities and the Greater Manchester Schools and Colleges networks were provided with the toolkit to share information with both staff and students.
- 2.4.44 A wide variety of transport bodies were included in the non-statutory engagement, including OneBus, Transport for the North, the Urban Transport Group and the Safer Roads GM Partnership. Information about the consultation was also sent to major rail operators. Community groups with an interest in transport, including various 'Friends of' rail station groups were also encouraged to participate in and raise awareness of the consultation.

2.5 Qualitative research

Purpose

- 2.5.1 Alongside the public consultation, a programme of qualitative research was carried out by Ipsos MORI to complement the consultation process and to explore bus reform options and the Proposed Franchising Scheme with members of the public and other key interest groups including businesses, young people and those residing outside of Greater Manchester in neighbouring authorities.

Method

- 2.5.2 Two large-scale deliberative workshops were held in central Manchester in November 2019. These workshops took place over an extended time period (six hours) which provided an opportunity for participants to 'deliberate' the proposals over the course of the day. In addition to the deliberative workshops, six shorter focus groups were carried out during December 2019. Three of these groups were carried out face-to-face, and three were conducted as online focus groups due to the geographical dispersal of the participants.

- 2.5.3 The research focused on key questions from the short questionnaire, in particular:

- Current challenges with the bus market in Greater Manchester
- Reform of the bus market
- Public sector funding
- Economic case and its conclusion
- Financial case and its conclusion
- The Scheme

- 2.5.4 A summary report on the qualitative research activity has been produced by Ipsos MORI and the findings have been considered by TfGM alongside the responses to the consultation.

2.6 Quality assurance

- 2.6.1 The Consultation Institute (tCI) were appointed to provide independent quality assurance throughout the consultation process.

- 2.6.2 Through a series of reviews, the quality assurance process is designed to ensure that consultation activity meets the required standard.

- 2.6.3 Following the close of the consultation period, tCI determined GMCA had met the statutory requirements for best practice. This is tCI's highest level of accreditation and means that every area of the consultation was delivered to a high standard.

3 CONSULTATION METHODOLOGY FOR THE SECOND CONSULTATION PERIOD

- 3.1.1 The second consultation period commenced on 2 December 2020 and closed on 29 January 2021. As set out above at 1.3.4, it was recognised that any consultation conducted in a time of Covid-19-related restrictions would be different to previous consultations; all activity was therefore planned and delivered to ensure that as far as possible the consultation was fair and met best practice guidance for consultation and engagement.
- 3.1.2 As a consequence of Covid-19 and the associated government guidance, traditional consultation-style events and drop-in sessions could not be hosted during the consultation period due to the restrictions on large gatherings. To ensure that consultees were still given an opportunity to participate in the process, online events, webinars, and social media was used in order to answer questions and engage.
- 3.1.3 Additionally, in recognition of the Covid-19-related restrictions, a bespoke virtual engagement space was developed. This is a web-based solution that allows the same level of detail about the consultation to be shared as in a traditional physical presentation, with the advantage of being able to host live chat sessions.
- 3.1.4 To ensure that those that did not have access to digital channels could still participate, hard copy materials could be requested via a dedicated phonenumber (hosted by TfGM) and were available in public buildings across Greater Manchester. People could also respond to the consultation via phone direct to Ipsos MORI.
- 3.1.5 Further detail on this activity is set out below.

3.2 Consultation documentation and questions

- 3.2.1 All consultation documentation was published on 2 December 2020 online and can be viewed at www.gmconsult.org.uk (see closed activities). All documentation was accessible online with screen readers and a guide was produced and published to assist.
- 3.2.2 In order to mitigate against delivering a digital-only approach and Covid-19 restrictions, hard copies of the documentation were available on request. In addition, 3,000 copies of the consultation document and questionnaires were available in Travelshops across Greater Manchester; and copies were distributed to libraries open to the public at that time in Bolton, Manchester, Rochdale, Stockport, Tameside and Trafford.
- 3.2.3 Consultation documentation included:
- The Covid-19 Impact Report;

- A consultation document;
 - A questionnaire (available online and in hard copy);
 - A number of supporting papers, including the draft Equality Impact Assessment on the Proposed Franchising Scheme; and
 - Relevant background documents, including the materials from the first consultation period and associated reports following the close of that consultation.
- 3.2.4 The main consultation document set out why GMCA considers that bus franchising remains the right way to reform the bus market, having considered the possible effects of Covid-19. The document set out a summary of the original conclusions across the five cases in the Assessment and the Proposed Franchising Scheme, any changes resulting from the first consultation and the outcome of the further work undertaken through the Covid-19 Impact Report.
- 3.2.5 The consultation questions were developed to allow consultees to provide views on the Assessment in the light of the Covid-19 Impact Report across the five cases in the Assessment, on the Proposed Franchising Scheme, and on whether or not the Mayor should make such a scheme.
- 3.2.6 There were 12 questions which were embedded in the consultation document and also provided in a standalone questionnaire. They covered the following:
- The scenario-based approach used to understand how the conclusions of the Assessment could be impacted by Covid-19;
 - Consideration of the potential impact of Covid-19 on the five Cases of the assessment (Strategic, Economic, Commercial, Financial and Management) and on the Proposed Franchising Scheme itself; and
 - General support or opposition for the introduction of the Proposed Franchising Scheme, whether views had changed, and any further comments.
- 3.2.7 A full list of the consultation questions can be found in Appendix 1 of the Second Consultation Document.
- 3.2.8 In line with the first consultation period and in order to obtain as much detailed feedback as possible, the majority of the consultation questions were asked as open questions. The closed question from the first consultation period which asked respondents to provide the level of support for the introduction of the Proposed Franchising Scheme was repeated.
- 3.2.9 Consultation materials and publicity confirmed that responses by email, telephone or letter would also be accepted alongside completion of the questionnaire.

Respondents could therefore respond by online response form, hard copy questionnaire (which could be returned to a freepost address), by email to a dedicated consultation email address, by telephoning a dedicated number and verbally recording a response, or by writing to a freepost address.

3.2.10 As with the first consultation period, although a ‘digital first’ approach was undertaken, it was ensured that the consultation was as accessible as possible:

- Hard copies of all documents including questionnaires were available in locations across Greater Manchester, namely libraries and Travelshops.
- A dedicated phonenumber was established for the consultation period to answer queries which also offered a ‘LanguageLine’ service to support non-English speakers. Consultation responses could also be provided via a phonenumber managed by Ipsos MORI.
- A virtual engagement platform was also available, which sought to replicate face to face engagement by providing all consultation materials in one place. A chat facility was available for members of the public to speak to TfGM staff about the consultation.
- A sentence encouraging people to respond to the consultation and providing detail of where to find more information or access support was translated into the top six languages in Greater Manchester and was included prominently on the Consultation Document.

3.3 **Awareness raising and engagement activity: previous statutory consultees**

3.3.1 The same groups of statutory consultees from the first consultation period were recontacted for the second consultation period.

3.3.2 They were contacted on 20 November 2020 with an update on progress and to confirm that GMCA would be considering a report on the impact of Covid-19 on the bus market and a recommendation to proceed with a further period of consultation at its meeting the following week. A further update was provided for the start of the consultation period.

3.3.3 All previous statutory consultees were offered a one-to-one briefing at several points throughout the consultation period. Details of briefings held are set out below.

GM bus operators

3.3.4 Bus operators (as well as OneBus, who was not a statutory consultee as set out in the Act but is the organisation appointed to represent the views of the majority of the bus operators in Greater Manchester) were invited to a briefing on 19 November 2020. The purpose of this briefing was to provide operators with an update on the bus market reform programme and the development of the Covid-19 Impact report. The following operators were represented:

- Arriva NorthWest
- CPT
- Warrington’s Own Buses
- Preston Bus Ltd
- Stagecoach
- OneBus
- First
- Go North West
- Stagecoach Merseyside & South Lancashire
- High Peak/Centre Bus
- Diamond North West
- Arriva Wales
- Rosso
- Belle Vue Manchester

Local Authorities

- 3.3.5 Nine briefings were held with the local authorities during the consultation period – seven through all member briefings (Bury, Oldham, Rochdale, Tameside, Trafford, Stockport and Wigan) and two districts (Bolton and Salford) invited TfGM officers to brief their cabinet.
- 3.3.6 Across the seven district all member briefings, 181 councillors attended which is over a third of all Greater Manchester Councillors.
- 3.3.7 A briefing at an officer level also took place with Transport Strategy Group (TSG) which has representatives from all 10 local authority areas, and an additional meeting with Rochdale Council officers also took place.

Others

- 3.3.8 A briefing with Bus Users UK took place on 7 January 2021.
- 3.3.9 A briefing with Transport Focus took place on 19 January 2021.
- 3.4 Public awareness and engagement activity: local passengers, the public and other stakeholders**

- 3.4.1 GMCA and TfGM, working closely with the ten GM Councils, developed a comprehensive communications and engagement plan to raise awareness of and encourage participation in the consultation using a range of channels and ensuring any implications from the GM tier 3 and, subsequently, national restrictions in place were considered and addressed. While traditional consultation-style events and drop-in sessions could not be hosted due to the restrictions on large gatherings, along with other offline activities, online events, webinars, and social media was used in order to answer questions and engage.
- 3.4.2 45,000 copies of the summary leaflet and 750 posters were delivered to locations across Greater Manchester including health centres, GP surgeries, post offices, railway and bus stations, libraries, colleges, universities and supermarkets. A further 10,000 copies of the summary leaflet were distributed by post to people renewing their travel passes, including older people renewing their concessionary passes with TfGM in December 2020 and January 2021.
- 3.4.3 Free channels such as GMCA, TfGM, local authority and public sector social media channels, websites, newsletters, magazines and emails to existing databases were used to raise awareness amongst engaged audiences. Paid channels including outdoor media, digital, radio, print and social media advertising were also used to increase reach and penetration, whilst earned channels, including media engagement and community engagement, were supported by paid media to increase reach amongst specific communities and audiences. Those without digital access were engaged through outdoor media (as appropriate for those continuing to travel during Covid-19 restrictions) and print advertising/editorial. This resulted in the following activity across channels:
- Over 70 pieces of balanced media coverage were generated during the consultation period, around 40 of which were in local print titles.
 - Over 30k visits to www.gmconsult.org during the consultation period. Newsletter email campaigns were the single largest contributor to GM Consult landing page traffic, driving nearly 12.5k visits to the site.
 - GMCA, TfGM and the 10 local authorities collectively tweeted or retweeted about the #GMBusConsultation over 260 times generating more than 10.6m impressions (i.e. interactions with the content).
 - On Twitter over 180,000 followers were reached through community, education, health and business stakeholders sharing content about the consultation.
 - In addition, across the consultation period briefings were held with 24 organisations with over 300 attendees in total.
 - Paid social delivered nearly 3.1m impressions. Facebook delivered 2.7m impressions with 13.3k link clicks.

- Paid search provided an easy way for people to access the consultation questionnaire online. Using keywords around buses in general also enhanced awareness via impressions. Paid search delivered 29.4k impressions and 2k clicks, with a Click Thru Rate (i.e. the ratio of users who click on a specific link to the number of total users who view a page) of 7.19%.
- Radio adverts via Smooth Radio targeted audiences across the North West and delivered an estimated 4.9m impressions/impacts (i.e. the number of times the advert could have been heard) with a 888k reach (i.e. the number of people who have heard the advert).

3.4.4 As with the first consultation, levels of participation and reach were monitored throughout the consultation period, to evaluate the effectiveness of activity, as well as assessing any need to modify the approach to target particular groups.

Virtual engagement platform

3.4.5 Engagement sessions with stakeholder organisations took place online via Microsoft Team and Zoom. Details of specific briefings held are outlined below.

3.4.6 A virtual engagement platform was developed, which sought to replicate face to face engagement by providing all consultation materials in one place. Visitors to the space could navigate around the virtual room, viewing the consultation document and supporting materials to find out more about the consultation and how they could respond. Throughout the consultation period, 776 people visited the space and the average time spent was 3 minutes and 5 seconds, suggesting that this was a relatively engaged audience who spent time viewing the content.

3.4.7 The virtual engagement platform featured a chat facility which facilitated live Q&A sessions throughout the consultation period. A total of 45 chat sessions were hosted by TfGM.

Targeted Communications and Engagement Activity

GMCVO partnership to reach seldom heard groups

3.4.8 During the consultation period, bespoke activity was delivered to reach seldom heard groups in partnership with Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisation (GMCVO) – the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector support and development organisation covering the Greater Manchester area. The purpose of the activity was to engage with relevant groups about the future of buses in Greater Manchester and encourage them to respond to the consultation. Responses were not sought through the engagement events and this was made clear to participants.

3.4.9 The groups identified to engage with through this activity were those who were more likely to use bus services. This included older people, younger people and

people from ethnic minority backgrounds, including those who do not have English as a first language, from across GM.

3.4.10 Specific activity delivered in partnership with GMCVO included:

- The GM Older People's network hosted a meeting with 13 people, including members of their transport group and representatives from other older people's groups, such as HMR Circle Volunteer Drivers Service and Manager of Nephra Good Neighbour;
- The GM BAME network hosted a briefing with ten of their members from across Greater Manchester;
- GMCVO facilitated a face-to-face workshop with the GM Hidden Talent Youth panel, which was attended by three people, one panel member also fed their comments in via email; and
- Groups affiliated with the GM BAME network hosted a series of small group sessions with 50 individuals who do not have English as a first language. The organisations involved in this were: Dynamic Support of Greater Manchester - mostly work with French speaking Africans; Wai Yin Centre – working with Chinese communities; Manchester Refugee Support Network – working across a number of refugee communities; BollyFit Active - mainly working with Pakistani females; Global Vision – mainly work with the Black African community and young people and also other communities in the Gorton and Crumpsall areas.

Supporting people who don't have English as a first language

3.4.11 Members at the 11 June 2020 meeting of the Housing Planning, Environment Overview Scrutiny Committee expressed concern around limited engagement with non-English speakers during the first consultation period. The activity with GMCVO outlined above sought to mitigate this and was delivered alongside wider stakeholder engagement and communications activity, provision of the Language Line facility on the helpline, and a translated call to action on the consultation document to help people with a language other than English find out more and respond to the consultation.

Additional targeted activity and support

3.4.12 A summary of additional targeted activity across earned and paid channels is set out below and was delivered in partnership with local authorities.

Older people

3.4.13 Extensive activity was undertaken to engage with older people and groups that represent their interests. This was supported with paid media targeting on social channels for these audiences.

- 3.4.14 Groups such as Age UK branches, the GM Ageing Hub and the GM Older People's Network supported reach and engagement with communities of older people in each Greater Manchester borough.
- 3.4.15 As well as generating coverage in local print media through issuing press releases throughout the consultation period, a targeted series of print advertising ran in publications outside of central Manchester to help reach this group. The total circulation for the local newspapers (including paid media adverts) was 1.7m. An advertising partnership was also run with Reach, the parent company of Manchester Evening News, which includes adverts in the MEN and its sister papers. This provided over 3m opportunities for the advert to be seen, based on circulation and readership figures for the printed press adverts.
- 3.4.16 Press releases were sent to both local and community radio stations and GM-wide radio stations. A radio advertising campaign was run with Smooth FM for the initial two weeks of the consultation, and the advert was heard over 4.8m times by over 888k individual people.
- 3.4.17 Concessionary pass holder email databases (for the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme and Women's Concessionary Travel Scheme) were used to help raise awareness of the consultation amongst older groups. Around 10,000 leaflets summarising the proposals were also sent out with all new travel passes, including passes applicable for over 55s.
- 3.4.18 Additionally, paid social and digital display adverts were also used to target all age groups, including 55+ audience. Facebook saw the 55+ audiences served with the most impressions, and this group also drove the highest number of clicks and the highest click thru rate %.

Younger people

- 3.4.19 A wide variety of youth organisations were approached and provided with toolkits, such as the GM Youth Network and the GM Hidden Talent Youth Panel. Emails were circulated to Bolton Sixth Form, Bolton College, Tameside- Ashton Sixth Form College, Tameside Scouts, Tameside Youth Forum, Wigan Scouts, Wigan Youth Zone. University of Manchester Students' Union were particularly engaged and tweeted about the consultation, reaching 19.9k followers.
- 3.4.20 Paid social on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter and adverts on Google Search were used to target all age groups, including 13-24-year olds. 18-24-year olds accounted for the second highest click throughs on the Google search advert to the consultation webpage.
- 3.4.21 In addition, Spotify and Youtube adverts were used specifically to reach younger audiences.
- 3.4.22 Emails promoting the consultation were also sent out to 16-18-year olds with an iGo pass in Greater Manchester and to 18-20 year olds with the Our Pass.

Disabled people

- 3.4.23 Extensive work was undertaken to engage with organisations representing a range of disabilities.
- 3.4.24 The Disability Design Reference Group, which is coordinated by the disabled people's organisation, Breakthrough UK, and includes members with a range of impairments, were given a briefing followed by a question and answer session.
- 3.4.25 Other local engagement activity included Tameside Stroke Association, Tameside Alzheimer's Society, Tameside and Glossop Dementia Action Alliance. Alongside this, the following organisations were contacted by telephone during the consultation period: GM Coalition of Disabled People, GM Autism Consortium, Disability Stockport, Venture Arts, Manchester Disabled People's Access Group.
- 3.4.26 Three press releases were issued to Able Magazine and The Voice, whose audiences are disabled people across all age groups in the UK.
- 3.4.27 In order to offer non-digital channels, hard copy materials could be requested via a dedicated phonenumber (hosted by TfGM). An alternative phonenumber hosted by Ipsos MORI was also available which allowed people to make a 'response via phone' as an additional method due to Covid-19 and the lack of opportunity for face-to-face engagement.
- 3.4.28 A British Sign Language translation of the animation was also prepared and made available on the GM Consult website.

Ethnic minority groups

- 3.4.29 TfGM engaged with the Caribbean and African Health Network, GM Pakistani Association and GM BAME Network to support engagement with a range of community groups across Greater Manchester to raise awareness of the consultation.
- 3.4.30 As well as outreach at a Greater Manchester level, this approach provided opportunities for more localised engagement, for example with the Tameside Diversity Matters. Information about the consultation was also shared through the GMCA Equalities Panel.
- 3.4.31 The Asian Leader featured a news story about the consultation alongside an advert, and follow-up press releases were also issued to Asian Image, Asian Express, Asian Sounds, Crescent Community Radio and Bolton Hindu Forum Radio.

Religion

- 3.4.32 Engagement with the Greater Manchester Faith Leaders Group took place and content was shared with their networks which includes representation from the following religious communities: Church of England, Catholic Church, Methodist

Church, Salvation Army, Christian Way of Life Churches, Baptist Church, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Zoroastrian.

- 3.4.33 Local authority engagement included Bolton Council of Mosques, Bolton Hindu Forum, Bolton Christian Community Cohesion, Tameside New Life Church, Tameside Christians Against Poverty, Wigan – Ashton Churches Together, St Thomas Church, St Matthews Church, Park Lane Unitarian Church, Living Faith Church Orrell, Christ Church Pennington and Hindley Green Family Church.
- 3.4.34 Phone calls to talk through the proposals and support available was also given to the Jewish Federation, Bolton Council of Mosques and Interfaith Forum Oldham.
- 3.4.35 The Asian Leader featured a news story, and three press releases were issued to the Jewish Chronicle, Jewish Telegraph and Jewish Life to target religious groups.

Gender

- 3.4.36 Officers engaged with the Women’s Institute as well as more specific groups such as Women in Transport.
- 3.4.37 Both paid social media advertising and digital display advertising were reviewed during the consultation and, due to an underrepresentation in female respondents at the mid-point, advertising to women was increased on Google Search and specific, targeted adverts ran on Facebook and Instagram. The upweighting of the paid Google Search adverts led to the female audience generating one of the highest numbers of click through rates of all groups.

Sexuality

- 3.4.38 Information was sent to LGBT Foundation and The Proud Trust for them to share with their networks.

Elected representatives

- 3.4.39 Councillors and MPs in Greater Manchester and those representing neighbouring authorities were invited to respond to the consultation.
- 3.4.40 Nine briefings were held with the Greater Manchester local authorities during the consultation period – seven through all member briefings (Bury, Oldham, Rochdale, Tameside, Trafford, Stockport and Wigan) and two districts (Bolton and Salford) invited TfGM officers to brief their cabinet.
- 3.4.41 Across the seven district all member briefings, 181 councillors attended which is over a third of all Greater Manchester Councillors.
- 3.4.42 Greater Manchester MPs were offered the opportunity to attend one of two briefing sessions on the consultation. Where members were unable to join a session the option of a one-to-one meeting was also offered.

- 3.4.43 Communication toolkits were issued to GM Councils, Greater Manchester MPs and Members of Greater Manchester Transport Committee (GMTC) to promote participation amongst their constituents.

Business

- 3.4.44 Business representative bodies such as the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses, Confederation of British Industry and CityCo were engaged to raise awareness of the consultation amongst their members and to respond on their behalf.
- 3.4.45 Information was also shared with local business networks and key retail sites, e.g. businesses located at Trafford Park including the Trafford Centre. As part of this engagement, information was shared from the Trafford Centre to all retail providers through their network.
- 3.4.46 Communication toolkits were provided for these groups to share with their networks; over 700 businesses and representative organisations received them.
- 3.4.47 A selection of third-party organisations were engaged to generate wider public and business engagement and to help promote the consultation. These included Greater Manchester Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), Centre for Cities thinktank, IPPR North thinktank; Northern Powerhouse Partnership (NPP and Urban Transport Group.

Other sectors and interest groups

- 3.4.48 Activity was undertaken with other campaign and interest groups relating to transport, community/place, the environment, education, health and the third sector. These organisations were contacted by email at a Greater Manchester, regional and national level as appropriate.
- 3.4.49 Executives of Greater Manchester NHS Trusts were notified of the consultation and, via the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP), Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) received toolkits to share information. A wide range of health groups, including Healthwatch branches, also received the toolkit, which encouraged them to share information on their social channels.
- 3.4.50 In the education sector, Vice-Chancellors of each of the Greater Manchester universities and the Greater Manchester Schools and Colleges networks were provided with the toolkit to share information with both staff and students. Directors of Education were also sent the toolkit.
- 3.4.51 A wide variety of transport bodies were included in the non-statutory engagement, including Transport for the North, the Urban Transport Group and the Safer Roads GM Partnership. Information about the consultation was also sent to major rail operators. Community groups in with an interest in transport, including various

'Friends of' rail station groups were also encouraged to participate in and raise awareness of the consultation.

3.5 Qualitative research

Purpose

- 3.5.1 Alongside the public consultation, a programme of qualitative research was carried out by Ipsos MORI to complement the consultation process and to explore in greater depth the Covid-19 Impact Report in relation to the conclusions of the assessment and the Proposed Franchising Scheme. This activity was carried out with a representative sample of GM residents and with individuals aged 70+, the latter group being targeted due to lower levels of digital access within this cohort and consideration of access to the consultation during ongoing lockdown restrictions.

Method

- 3.5.2 An online deliberative workshop took place over two, three-hour sessions with the group of 45 members of the public. Quotas for participants in this workshop were set for: gender, age, ethnicity, disability, local authority, urbanity, SEG, current and future bus use and access to a car.
- 3.5.3 Additionally, a total of eight 60-minute telephone depth interviews were carried out with a broad range of individuals aged 70+.
- 3.5.4 The research focused on key questions from the consultation questionnaire, namely:
- Future bus demand and the scenarios;
 - The Strategic Case and its conclusions in light of Covid-19;
 - The Economic Case and its conclusions in light of Covid-19;
 - The Financial Case and its conclusions in light of Covid-19; and
 - Why GMCA is proceeding now.
- 3.5.5 The findings of the qualitative research activity have been reported by Ipsos MORI and considered by TfGM alongside the summary of the consultation responses.