

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
GMCA OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 26 OCTOBER 2022 AT
THE GMCA OFFICES, TOOTAL BUILDINGS, OXFORD STREET, MANCHESTER**

PRESENT:

Bolton	John Walsh (Chair)
Bolton	Hamid Khurram
Bolton	Champak Mistry
Bury	Nathan Boroda
Manchester	Greg Stanton
Manchester	Mandie Shilton Godwin
Manchester	John Leech
Oldham	Colin McLaren
Oldham	Umar Nasheen
Rochdale	Ashley Dearnley
Rochdale	Tom Besford
Salford	John Mullen
Salford	Jim King
Salford	Alex Warren
Stockport	Mike Hurleston
Tameside	Naila Sharif
Trafford	Barry Brotherton
Wigan	Joanne Marshall

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

GM Mayor	Andy Burnham
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OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

GMCA	Eamonn Boylan
GMCA	Andy Hollingsworth
GMCA	Sylvia Welsh
GMCA	Ninoshka Martins
TfGM	Steve Warner

O&SC 28/22

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Elise Wilson (Stockport) and Amanda Peers (Stockport).

O&SC 29/22

CHAIRS ANNOUNCEMENTS AND URGENT BUSINESS

There were no Chair's announcements or urgent business.

O&SC 30/22

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest raised in relation to any items on the agenda.

O&SC 31/22

**THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 28
SEPTEMBER 2022**

RESOLVED /-

1. That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 September be approved as a correct record.
2. That it be noted that the Task and Finish exercise into Integrated Water Management had begun and members from those areas not represented were further encouraged to engage.

3. That it be noted that Cllr Mike Hurleston and Cllr Joanne Marshall expressed an interest in being part of the Integrated Water Management Task and Finish Group.

4. That it be noted that Cllr Greg Stanton would feed in work being undertaken on this subject in Manchester City Council where relevant.

O&SC 32/22

DEVOLUTION TRAILBLAZER UPDATE

The GM Mayor, Andy Burnham introduced the report and updated members on the recent discussions held on the Trailblazer Devolution negotiations between Greater Manchester and the UK Government.

Members welcomed the report and expressed their thanks for the work that had been done by the team to progress work despite the recent uncertainty in Government.

In considering the funding consolidation and accountability policy area, the approach to exploring land value capture mechanisms was welcomed and members suggested the need for officers to explore the benefits aligned to GM. The Mayor agreed with the comments and noted that this was a crucial step in setting up the infrastructure for a wider integrated transport network whilst also being able to raise revenue locally, however, this approach would require cross party support and a mechanism to ensure benefit equity across GM.

As part of the recent negotiations GM had put forward a proposal for a single block grant to allow GM much greater funding flexibility. A member therefore sought to understand whether there was an element of risk of being excluded from any further funding with this approach. Officers advised that the intention behind this proposal was to move away from a complete dependence on a competitive bidding process and to have a mature devolution system. This proposal would not withstand the risk of GM being precluded from any funds that might be on offer.

The benefits of a Combined Authority model in a regional context were noted. A single block grant funding model would allow GM further control over how resources would be deployed. To ensure success of this model and empower devolution in GM communities, it was crucial for GM to have a strong financial base and the position this needed to be re-iterated to Government.

In response to a member's query regarding changes to the business rate retention scheme, it was clarified that any alteration to existing Local Authority mechanisms would be made through the appropriate governance arrangements and in agreement with the 11 accountable bodies, confirming the GMCA and the 10 GM Districts were the accountable bodies.

Members noted the need for improved partnership working to maximise the positive benefits of devolution and to have greater impact on the health of residents. The Mayor noted the comments and stated the need for a more preventative community approach. It was noted that despite the challenges there had been great success in what GM had been able to achieve as a result of greater alignment to a single shared objective. The Mayor went on to share the headlines from the recently issued Health Foundation report that had been produced by the University of Manchester and the University of Melbourne. The report clearly outlined that GM had a rising life expectancy noticeable in more deprived communities in comparison to other areas, which was seen as huge success. It was agreed that the report and further examples on the success of devolution would be shared with members.

It was noted that as a result of devolved powers, GM had been able to deliver an improved offer for GM residents and therefore 'positive impact' should be built into the outcomes framework. Members urged that the impact of the Trailblazer needed to be evidenced by a positive change in the lives of residents.

To ensure effective accountability under the Levelling Up White Paper, it was felt that clear and simplified outcomes would need to be published to create awareness of the various accountable bodies' responsibilities. This would enable members of the public to discern the credibility of decisions and clearly identify the decision maker.

Members were keen to ensure that the proposal to Government included a position statement that any benefits from the Devolution Trailblazer would remain in GM.

In discussing the proposal around the Adult Education Budget, the Mayor explained that GM needed a clear devolved role in the wider skills system to enable GM to work with providers to align the local skills offer to meet the needs of local businesses and residents.

In response to a member's query on how devolved power would empower communities whilst ultimately tackling health inequalities, the Mayor provided the Committee with an overview of the Levelling Up White Paper proposal. Through this proposal GM would be able to raise the standards in the Private Rental Sector and hold private landlords accountable to maintain housing quality and standards. Members were also advised of the Housing Quality Pathfinder through which different regulators and levers would be utilised to drive-up standards.

In considering the role of the revised scrutiny arrangement, it was suggested that the Committee would be best placed to track and measure the progress of Trailblazer proposals. It was reported that as part of the Trailblazer discussions, GM had also engaged with officials to improve the quality of the sub-national datasets available to the city-region. Improved quality of the sub-national datasets would enable more effective research and inform policymaking decisions. Members were therefore requested to think about specific datasets that would be helpful in supporting effective scrutiny.

The Committee was informed of the meeting that had been scheduled with the Chairs of other Scrutiny Committees within Mayoral Combined Authorities. The Chair advised of his intention to discuss a potential shared approach to the effective scrutiny of the devolution trailblazer deal with a view to providing an update outlining the discussions and proposed approach. The GM Mayor welcomed this shared approach and commented that a clear scrutiny programme could add further value to the negotiations for a further devolution deal.

RESOLVED /-

1. That the contents of the report, including the implications of new forms of financial freedom, new forms of accountability to Whitehall, and the potential for GMCA to take on wholly new functions or responsibilities be noted.
2. That officers be requested to circulate the Health Foundation report on the findings of the University of Manchester and the University of Melbourne.
3. That the Committee be requested to consider potential data gaps which could be requested from Government to support the performance monitoring of the implementation of the trailblazer in GM.
4. That officers be requested to ensure that the ‘positive benefit’ element be included as one of the key principles to measure the success of Trailblazer deals and that comments from Committee be reflected in the trailblazer negotiations.
5. That it be noted that the Chair proposed to meet with the Scrutiny Chair of the West Midlands Combined Authority to consider a potential shared approach to scrutiny of the Trailblazer going forward.

O&SC 33/22BEE NETWORK OVERVIEW

The GM Mayor Andy Burnham introduced a report which provided an update on the progress made towards delivering a number of key elements of the Bee Network, including bus fares, fleet, and depots, notably the most significant changes for the transport network in GM for many years.

Further clarity was provided on the timetable moving towards full franchising of the bus network; Tranche 2 (north of city region) was due to commence on 31st March 2024 and Tranche 3 (south of city region) by 5th January 2025, resulting in a fully operation Bee Network.

Bringing stability to the network at a time of great economic uncertainty was seen as a vital step in delivering the GM Strategy ambitions.

Given the considerable investment in the Transport network, members sought to understand whether there were any plans to support the night-time economy through implementation of additional late-night services. The Mayor noted the comments and agreed that this was a crucial step in unlocking the barriers to the night-time economy. However, it was explained that this would require significant subsidy from the GMCA, which at present was not available. Notwithstanding that, discussions would continue with Government to secure a financial settlement to stabilise the network and counteract the unforeseen costs as a result of reduced patronage and the increasing cost of energy supply.

Safety and security on the network were also highlighted as significant barriers to increasing patronage. Members were advised that considerable amount of work was underway around managing access and working alongside TfGM TravelSafe Partnership, to improve safety across the Network to build the trust of residents. The Mayor also advised that the results of the recent launch of 'Operation AVRO' by GMP had provided residents with improved safety on the network and had assisted with increasing fare evasions, amongst other criminal issues.

Safety on the roads also remained a concern for Members, the Committee were advised that there were elements within the CRSTS programme of activity to improve active travel schemes to make it more appealing to walk and cycle. The Mayor suggested that it was a timely opportunity to review the speed camera network in GM in conjunction with Community Speed Watch.

GM was now in receipt of 27 additional new trams that would be used to offset demand during peak hours, including the increased number of visitors to the region for specific events. Members were assured that TfGM would continue to work with event organisers and all transport providers to address overcrowding on trams as a result of high volumes of passengers.

In response to a member's query regarding the procurement process for bus franchising, officers advised that the process had been designed to encourage different sizes of bus operators to bid in each of the three tranches.

It was noted that the Bee Network was a critical enabler of Greater Manchester's ambitions to achieve Net Zero, with improved road safety to be considered as an integral mechanism to encourage active travel. A member sought to understand the progress made in the introduction of the Bee Bike Scheme and the impact of behavioural change. It was agreed that a report outlining the impact on investment would be circulated to members as appropriate. It was reported that the scheme was already exceeding its predicted patronage levels.

Members asked if bus franchising would allow for a greater control of regular and punctual services especially in those outlying areas in GM, given the limited transport connectivity. Bus Franchising would also enable improved performance monitoring, access to real time information and the ability to hold the GM Mayor to account for delivery.

With regards to the Vantage service, a member reported that as a result of the subsidised fares this service had been oversubscribed. It was agreed that officers would provide a full update on the current state of operations and passenger usage on the V2 service to Councillor Joanne Marshall.

RESOLVED /-

1. That the content of the report, and the progress made towards delivering the Bee Network be noted.

2. That officers be requested to submit a report to the Committee on the provision of real time information through the bus franchising system roll out in due course.

3. That officers be requested to provide an update on the current state of operations and on passenger usage on the Vantage V2 service to Councillor Joanne Marshall.

4. That officers be requested to submit a report to the Committee providing and update on behavioural change as a result of the investment into active travel at an appropriate opportunity.

O&SC 34/22 WORK PROGRAMME & FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

RESOLVED /-

1. That the Overview & Scrutiny Work Programme for the forthcoming months be noted.

2. That a report on the roll out of digital fibre be brought to a future meeting of the Committee.

O&SC 35/22 FUTURE MEETING DATES

RESOLVED /-

That the following dates for the rest of the municipal year be noted:

- Wednesday 23 November
- Wednesday 14 December
- Wednesday 25 January
- Wednesday 8 February
- Wednesday 29 March

Signed by the Chair: (to be printed off and signed by the Chair at the next meeting)