

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
GMCA OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 25 JANUARY 2023 AT
THE GMCA OFFICES, TOOTAL BUILDINGS, OXFORD STREET, MANCHESTER**

PRESENT:

Bolton	John Walsh (Chair)
Bolton	Hamid Khurram
Bolton	Champak Mistry
Bury	Nathan Boroda
Bury	Mary Whitby
Manchester	Greg Stanton
Manchester	Mandie Shilton Godwin
Manchester	John Leech
Oldham	Colin McLaren
Salford	Alex Warren
Salford	John Mullen
Salford	Jim King
Stockport	Mike Hurleston
Stockport	Elise Wilson
Stockport	Amanda Peers
Trafford	Barry Brotherton
Wigan	Joanne Marshall

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

GM Mayor	Andy Burnham
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OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

GMCA	Eamonn Boylan
GMCA	Steve Wilson
GMCA	Nicola Ward

GMCA
TfGM

Ninoshka Martins
Steve Warrener

O&SC 48/23 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tom Besford (Labour, Rochdale), Naila Sharif (Labour, Tameside), Umar Nasheen (Labour, Oldham) and Amanda Peers (Labour, Stockport).

O&SC 49/23 CHAIRS ANNOUNCEMENTS AND URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair provided a summary of the feedback provided at the GMCA meeting held on 16th December 2022 regarding Delivering the Bee Network – Weekly Fare Cap.

O&SC 50/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Elise Wilson declared a personal interest in item 6 – Good Employment Charter.

**O&SC 51/23 THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23
NOVEMBER 2022**

RESOLVED /-

That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2023 be approved as a correct record.

O&SC 52/23

WORK PROGRAMME & FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

RESOLVED /-

1. That the Overview & Scrutiny Work Programme for the forthcoming months be noted.
2. That an informal briefing on the Community Wealth Hub would be arranged for members – date tbc.

O&SC 53/23

GOOD EMPLOYMENT CHARTER

Ian MacArthur, Director, Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter, introduced the item and provided an overview of the progress made on the delivery of the Charter since its launch in January 2022.

The report also provided an overview of the challenges of the changing nature of work and the growth of the good employment movement in the current socio-economic climate. The Charter aims continue to create a good employment 'movement' in Greater Manchester, by expanding its reach generally, and by focusing on engagement with sectors that require the most support and development to improve employment practice.

Further work was underway, with partners to develop innovative approaches to good employment practice and to continually evolve and develop new solutions. As part of the initiative to increase awareness of good employment standards, a number of initiatives focused on employees had been launched which included an online questionnaire to determine the quality of an individual's employment standard, good employment week (hosted from 19th – 24th June) etc.

Members welcomed the update and thanked officers for the work done to develop an inclusive economy by raising the profile of good employment standards.

A member queried whether there was any data available to understand the number of individuals living below the poverty line and whether there was any uplift in poverty as a result of being in receipt of the real living wage. It was noted that the Charter was still in its early years to be able to successfully measure the impact on the lives of employees. Officers advised that efforts were to be targeted at the foundational economy where poor employment standards continue to remain an issue and the real living wage was being used as an incentive to engage with employers who were interested in the broader agenda of good employment.

Concerning the profile of the organisations engaged, members were advised that a profile breakdown by sector would be shared with members after the meeting.

In response to a member's query on whether the Charter touched on fire and rehire practices, it was explained that the Charter was built on good practice and not engaging in fire and rehire was one of the seven elements of the membership agreement, if found in breach, employers would have their membership revoked.

It was noted that some of the most exploited workers were non-English speakers, therefore, to maximise reach through increased awareness of good employment standards through the questionnaire during good employment week, the materials would be made accessible for all and would be available in 7 popular ethnic minority languages. Members were advised that the information gathered would not be published but would be utilised to inform other pieces of work.

With regards to hard-to-reach employers such as SMEs and microbusiness, it was explained that by highlighting the benefits and utilising sectoral champions as examples it would help to attract new membership. Members were advised that the intention was to advocate for equal and truly inclusive working conditions across all sectors in GM irrespective of the business size.

It was highlighted that many businesses were conscious of their socio-economic impact but lack the guidance to adopt suitable policies therefore it would be useful to highlight these aspects when canvassing for membership to the Charter.

In terms of support to employees, it was highlighted that many organisations did have a number of employee welfare policies in place, but these were not being implemented. Members recognised the scale of the challenge, however welcomed that on signing up to the Charter, employers needed to meet the requirement for Employee Engagement & Voice thus, ensuring that the voices of employees were heard either through employee forum surveys or through representation with or without trade unions.

RESOLVED /-

That the report and its contents be noted.

That members would be provided with a sectoral breakdown of chartered supported organisations.

O&SC 54/23

OUR PASS EVALUATION

Steve Warrener, Managing Director TfGM introduced the report and provided members with the findings of the Our Pass evidence review that had been carried out against the original strategic key objectives for the initial Our Pass Pilot.

Officers advised on the take up of the scheme and use so far. It was reported that since Our Pass went live in September 2019, there has been strong take-up with over 30 million journeys. In 2019 there were c.40,000 active cards, 2020 c.46,000, 2021 c.48,000 and as of 23 December 2022, there were c. 48,817 active Our Pass cards in circulation out of an eligible cohort population of c.69,000. The first year was a double year and then each year following brings on a new cohort so as one group drops off another takes its place.

Our Pass was originally introduced to give young people greater access to educational, leisure, social and cultural activities, providing free bus travel,

discounted Metrolink travel and access to a host of opportunities (now referred to as 'Exclusives'), to all 16 – 18-year-olds across Greater Manchester (GM). It was therefore recommended that the Our Pass scheme be made permanent and to ensure continuous improvement, the scheme should be subject to an annual review of its performance going forward, to be completed at the end of each academic year.

Officers advised that following feedback from Local Authorities, schools, and young people, it was agreed to open the applications portal in early May 2022 rather than July (as had been the case in previous years) to encourage more applications and to give young people the opportunity to obtain support with applications through schools and colleges.

With regards to the data captured in terms of number of journeys and take up of the pass, officers advised that the baseline set of data was captured since the launch of the pass in 2019 and data about young people's trips prior to the introduction of Our Pass were based on other sources the assumption increase in bus usage was found to be of a minimum of a 13% increase in trips.

A member queried whether a breakdown of the data was available to understand any inequalities in terms of ethnicity, disability and gender and whether there was a direct correlation to the bus network coverage. Officers advised that a detailed demographic information had been captured and members were assured that this would be brought back as part of the ongoing review of the scheme.

Members queried whether this pass was available to those with disabilities. Officers assured members that that cohort were able to avail of the scheme in addition to the other concessions available to them through TfGM and Local Authorities.

It was noted that there were a few areas for improvement for the Our Pass scheme. Members were assured that work was underway with local authorities and education facilities to develop a set of targeted interventions that would increase take up of the scheme.

It was suggested that the conclusion at paragraph 9.1 in the report should be reworded to state that the pass would be made permanent for the remainder of the year subject to an annual review of its performance, recognising that the scheme needed to remain agile.

RESOLVED /-

1. That the findings of the Our Pass pilot evaluation be noted.
2. That the proposal to fund Our Pass on a continuing basis be noted
3. That the proposal for the scheme to be subject to an annual review of its performance, to be completed at the end of each academic year be noted.
4. That the proposal that a newly established Opportunities Board would have the responsibility for setting the terms and the scope of the review activity including whether any elements of dedicated evaluation activity should be commissioned externally be noted.

O&SC 55/23

**MAYORAL GENERAL BUDGET & PRECEPT
PROPOSALS**

The Mayor, Andy Burnham introduced the item and provided an overview of the proposals for the Mayoral General Budget and precept for 2023-24. The proposals being made were to include a significant element for the Fire Service (which had previously fallen to the GM Fire and Rescue Authority) along with the details of a supporting proposed precept for the Mayoral General Budget.

It was proposed that there would be an increase to the Mayoral General Precept (fire) for the financial year 2023/24. If the proposal was accepted, the Mayoral Precept would increase by £3.33 totalling to £71.96 for a Band A property split between £50.80 for the fire service and £21.16 for other Mayoral-funded services there would be an increase of £5.00 to £107.95 for a Band D property, with the fire service

accounting for £76.20 and £31.75 for non-fire. It was noted that this increase was not to fund additional services but to limit the disruption to existing essential services amid the cost-of-living crisis and to ensure services were maintained for residents.

In response to a member's query around what the term 'adequate reserves' encompassed, it was clarified that it referred to the of operating costs which would be c.10%, that would be sufficient to cover any unexpected circumstances during the year, this figure was based on the professional judgement of the treasurer.

Members queried where the £12m reserves to support the budget would be taken from. It was explained that the reserves were built up from earn back funding and yearly back flow from reformed services. This would be clearly explained in the February report on the overarching budget.

It was explained that that the percentage of properties in bands A, B and C in GM amounted to 82%, and the breakdown of additional charges would be clearly explained to residents to ensure that there wasn't any ambiguity around the precept levels.

In terms of the corporate recharge, outlined within the report, it was clarified that this referred to the contribution that the Mayor's budget makes to the running costs of the Combined Authority which include and is not limited to the contribution towards corporate functions.

Members highlighted the need to continue assisting Local Authorities to support residents especially in the current financial climate. The Mayor therefore highlighted to members the essential services that were to be funded through the Mayoral General and GMFRS element of the budget. This included the following:

- Continuation of the A Bed Every Night (ABEN) programme, which over the last 5 years has contributed to a reduction in rough sleeping in Greater Manchester. Alongside other funding streams, this contribution is part of a three-year plan to enable greater investment in other areas of homelessness

response and prevention and reduce the overall requirement by end of the 2024/25.

- The Our Pass scheme provided free bus travel within Greater Manchester for 16–18-year-olds and direct access to other opportunities in the region. The Our Pass scheme was funded from a combination of Precept, reserves, and other income. A budget of £16.9m was proposed for 2023/24 with a risk reserve held by TfGM if costs increase during the year, in line with the original funding strategy for the scheme as agreed by the GMCA.
- An essential priority was to bring bus services under local control through a franchising scheme to deliver passenger benefits including simpler fare and ticketing and joined-up planning between bus and tram journeys. The Mayoral precept and earn back funding would fund the procurement and implementation of local service contracts in three ‘Tranches’ with the Tranche 1 to commence operation in September 2023 and for Tranche 3 to commence operation in January 2025.
- Funding would be allocated to the Care Leavers concessionary pass to providing a free bus travel in Greater Manchester for young people 18-21 years old that have been in care.
- The work of the equality panels would also be facilitated by appropriate voluntary organisations, enabling investment in organisations which work in partnership with public services and the wider community, contributing to tackling the inequalities agenda.
- In addition to the above the budget would also fund the work of the Good Landlord Scheme to ensure tenants and landlords have access to information and advice, strengthened enforcement to target the poorest 15 quality and worst managed properties in the sector and capacity to enable landlords to better support tenants.

The Committee noted that there was evidence of increased pressure all across the system. However, the proposed mayoral precept would ensure continued delivery of services for residents in GM.

RESOLVED /-

1. That the GM Mayor's proposal to increase the Mayoral General Precept by £5 to £107.95 (for a Band D property), be noted as comprising of:
 - i) Functions previously covered by the Fire and Rescue Authority - precept of £76.20 (£5 increase);
 - ii) Other Mayoral General functions - precept of £31.75 (no increase).
2. That the following proposals be noted:
 - i) the overall budget proposed for the Fire and Rescue Service,
 - ii) the use of the reserves to support the revenue and capital budgets, and the assessment by the Treasurer that the reserves as of March 2024 are adequate,
 - iii). the proposed Fire Service capital programme and proposals for funding,
 - iv). the medium-term financial position for the Fire and Rescue Service covered by the Mayoral precept
3. That the details of the budget proposals for other Mayoral functions be noted.
4. That the use of reserves as set out in Paragraph 3.3 of the report be noted.
5. That it be noted that at the GMCA meeting on 10 February 2023 there would be an updated budget submitted, consistent with the precept proposals, to reflect final tax base and collection fund calculations and the final baseline funding settlement.

O&SC 56/23

FUTURE MEETING DATES

RESOLVED /-

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

- Wednesday 8 February
- Wednesday 22 March

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