

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
GMCA OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
HELD WEDNESDAY 27 SEPTEMBER 2023  
AT THE TOOTAL BUILDINGS, BROADHURST HOUSE, 1ST FLOOR,  
56 OXFORD STREET, MANCHESTER, M1 6EU**

**PRESENT:**

Councillor Nadim Muslim	Bolton Council (Chair)
Councillor Robert Morrisey	Bolton Council
Councillor Peter Wright	Bolton Council
Councillor Russell Bernstein	Bury Council
Councillor Nathan Boroda	Bury Council
Councillor Basil Curley	Manchester City Council
Councillor John Leech	Manchester City Council
Councillor Mandie Shilton Godwin	Manchester City Council
Councillor Jenny Harrison	Oldham Council
Councillor Sameena Zaheer	Rochdale Council
Councillor Joshua Brooks	Salford City Council
Councillor Lewis Nelson	Salford City Council
Councillor Helen Hibbert	Stockport Council
Councillor Naila Sharif	Tameside Council
Councillor Jill Axford	Trafford Council
Councillor Shaun Ennis	Trafford Council
Councillor Nathan Evans	Trafford Council
Councillor Fred Walker	Wigan Council
Councillor Joanne Marshall	Wigan Council

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:**

Andy Burnham	GM Mayor
Councillor Tom Ross	GM Portfolio Lead for Green City Region

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Gillian Duckworth	GMCA
Julie Connor	GMCA

Nicola Ward	GMCA
Elaine Mottershead	GMCA
David Hodcroft	TfGM
John Wrathmell	GMCA
Andy Hollingsworth	GMCA
Ann-Marie Purcell	TfGM
Stephen Rhodes	TfGM
Alex Cropper	TfGM
Richard Nickson	TfGM

### **O&SC 22/23            WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Tom Besford, Councillor Patricia Dale and Eamonn Boylan.

### **O&SC 23/23            CHAIRS ANNOUNCEMENTS AND URGENT BUSINESS**

The Chair thanked members for their contributions to the workshop on task and finish projects. The priority topic had been identified as “*How can we ensure that the targeted number of affordable homes can be delivered in Greater Manchester?*”. Members were asked to indicate their interest to Elaine Mottershead ([elaine.mottershead@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk](mailto:elaine.mottershead@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk)) if they wish to participate. There was a reminder that some of the work and meetings could be done online to assist with participation and attendance.

### **RESOLVED /-**

That members note the priority topic for a Task and Finish group and indicate if they wish to participate.

### **O&SC 24/23            DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

One declaration was received but was not applicable to the discussion taking place and therefore was not acted upon.

## **O&SC 25/23            MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 AUGUST 2023**

It was suggested that the minutes could be circulated to the Overview and Scrutiny Committees across the ten local authorities to improve links with local scrutiny activity. The Chair agreed to consider this.

### **RESOLVED /-**

1. That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 August 2023 be approved as a correct record.
2. That consideration be given to widening the distribution of the minutes of this Committee.

## **O&SC 26/23            TRAILBLAZER IMPLEMENTATION**

Andy Hollingsworth (Head of Devolution, GMCA) attended to give an update on the progress of implementing the latest trailblazer devolution deal which was announced and endorsed by the GMCA in March 2023. The deal contained over 130 commitments with varying timescales for delivery. The following areas were highlighted:

**Governance and Accountability:** The Governance review was still being considered including some transport powers that may be required but there would be a further update when that was clearer. There was an expectation that most of the governance could be contained within business-as-usual arrangements. There were still ongoing discussions and negotiations regarding the MP Scrutiny sessions set out in the Trailblazer deal but it was anticipated that the first session would be held within this municipal year.

**Data and Digital:** some of the most encouraging discussions that had been held were around a data partnership and having access to data that the UK Government holds which was not available at the Combined Authority level. The data partnership would be a good opportunity to get access to data and it would allow better decision making. Early discussions on this had been promising.

**Fiscal Devolution:** the two main elements to this included the ten-year extension of retaining 100% business rates (previously agreed on an annual basis) alongside the

progression of Growth Zones (smaller sites with 25-year rates retention). It was expected that the terms and conditions around these would largely be similar to those that had been in place during the pilot period.

**Housing and Regeneration:** in June 2023, a new deal for renters was published to try and tackle quality standards in the private rented sector, to implement some of the elements of the Trailblazer deal and to look at “where next?” for the housing sector. The Brownfield Funding should be acted upon quite quickly as the first year’s funding was within this financial year and the proposals submitted to the GMCA in June were being followed-up with another paper on 29 September 2023. The new powers for designation of larger selective licensing schemes at local authority level had been enacted.

**Skills and Employment:** a paper had been published in mid-May 2023 “Toward a Technical Education City Region” to set out the vision for use of the new powers. Proposals on a new integrated governance model were being submitted to GMCA on Friday 29 September 2023.

**Transport:** announcement of the first PAYGO (pay-as-you-go) on the rail system as a step towards the goal of full ticket integration by 2030. The first pilots would be Hadfield/Glossop-Piccadilly and Stalybridge-Victoria lines.

**Economy and Culture:** a range of new Strategic Partnerships were being considered and it was expected that they would start meeting in Autumn 2023.

**Net Zero and the Environment:** retrofit funding would be enacted through the Single Settlement process.

**Public Services:** the headline commitment highlighted was the discussions around funding streams relating to multiple disadvantages in the Single Settlement from the next funding review period.

**Single Settlement:** a set of principles had been agreed which would form the basis of a memorandum of understanding to scope out how the single settlement would operate.

The Spending Review in Autumn 2024 would confirm the amount of the Single Settlement and it was noted that this could be post-general election.

### **Comments and questions:**

- Members thanked officers for a comprehensive breakdown of the progress on the devolution deal.
- There was a query over whether the outcome of the general election would affect the Single Settlement. Officers responded that there were different elements to the Single Settlement, and some could be affected by the outcome of the election.
- There was a question over where risk might lie in relation to the business rates retention scheme and whether it would be businesses or local authorities who might be affected. Officers responded that none of the business rates arrangements in the deal would affect how much individual businesses pay. The main element of the deal was the certainty around the retention of business rates for ten years instead of a yearly agreement. Officers clarified that the Growth Zones would not be subject to any re-sets.
- The wider UKG policy shifts on standards (page 18 of the agenda pack) was queried as to whether this related to landlords no longer being required to improve their housing stock. If this was the case, it was not clear whether Greater Manchester would be in a position to insist on maintaining the requirements and standards for the private renters at a disadvantage. Officers responded that it was difficult to assess whether there would be scope for localised arrangements given the changes, but it could be possible in the next 12 months.
- There was discussion around the housing proposals and whether they would be enough to deal with the current housing crisis. Officers responded that the Brownfield funding was not for the construction of housing, it was for the remediation of the land for the houses. The deal had scope for much more control over the affordable homes programme which could help in addressing some of those issues.
- There was further clarification around the MP Scrutiny sessions. The timescale for setting them up would depend on getting agreement for the Terms of Reference. The GMCA Monitoring Officer confirmed that they would not be part of the formal governance arrangements. The sessions would serve the purpose of the MPs being

able to discuss issues with the GM Mayor and members of the GMCA but they would not have a statutory basis.

- A question was asked about the funding available for Retrofit but officers did not have the numbers to hand and would need to furnish them separately.
- In terms of resilience, officers confirmed that it had not been included in the report but that there was work ongoing.
- It was noted that the deal does not change decision-making arrangements for the GMCA and/or the local authorities. The mechanisms that were currently in place for local authority involvement and engagement would remain but there was some wider review of Governance generally within the GMCA.
- There was a query regarding the level of certainty regarding of the affordable homes programme. Officers confirmed that there would be an amount per year allocated and the first year had already been agreed. Future years may change depending on the Single Settlement.
- There was concern about local authorities that were not included the spatial framework for housing and regeneration. It was acknowledged that local authorities involvement in Places for Everyone was not related to the deal.
- A member gave an example about decision-making from the GMCA and its affect on a local authority. The example was in relation to the closure of a fire station to which the Mayor responded and outlined the rationale behind that decision-making.
- The issue of transport fares evasion was raised and whether there would be additional legal powers included to tackle this. This had not been included yet, but discussions were ongoing.
- With Housing quality, there were multiple problems not just with the private rented sector but also with the registered provider sector and this needed to be considered. There were no new powers to provide for this but there were ongoing discussions.
- The discussion returned to governance issues and whether more resources would be made available across GMCA.
- It was clarified that whilst individual councils don't retain 100% of the business rates, the 100% retention rate for GMCA was based on using it for further economic growth and development. There could be flexibility around how it might be further devolved.
- It was acknowledged that the Trailblazer deal does not give any additional powers or scope in terms of health and social care although the NHS had undergone its own restructure which was ongoing.

## **RESOLVED /-**

1. That further details on the funding for retrofit be circulated to members.
2. That the contents of the report be noted.
3. That further updates would be welcomed by members.

## **O&SC 27/23            BEE NETWORK – LAUNCH OF BUS FRANCHISING (TRANCHE 1)**

This item was presented by the GM Mayor Andy Burnham and supported by officers from Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) - Alex Cropper, Ann-Marie Purcell, and Stephen Rhodes.

The Mayor gave a brief introduction to the implementation of the first tranche of bus franchising which had taken place over the weekend of 23 and 24 September 2023. It was a vast undertaking and an impressive amount of work had taken place over that weekend including the transferring of technology, vehicles, infrastructure, and staff. On Sunday 24 September 2023, the first timetable under the Bee Network launched with 96% of the service operating. By Tuesday 26 September 2023, this had increased to 98.1%. The changeover had exceeded expectations, but it was acknowledged that there were still some issues with particular services although it should be easier and quicker to address them under the new arrangements.

There was discussion around the Bee Network app and some of its functionality. Some of the information required manual updates which were not being completed. There were also some challenges with the app linking to the V1 and V2 services, but this was being looked at.

It was noted that, despite some challenges, the first franchising tranche had been delivered on the target date and within the budget that was set.

Officers continued the discussion outlining how the network might be further developed and improved. There would be much more data available than under the previous arrangements. Area based network reviews were planned and this could be extended to thematic reviews such as night-time services. This engagement and consultation would

not happen immediately but would be available in the future. The Mayor further asked local authorities to establish localised Bee Network Committees which could feed into the main GMCA Bee Network Committee.

### **Comments and questions:**

- Committee members thanked TfGM officers for all their hard work and dedication in the successful launch.
- A recent news article which suggested that the network was already facing a significant deficit had raised concern. The Mayor responded that funding post-2025 was a widely recognised national concern. There had been no equivalent replacement of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements (CRSTS), but this was not unique to Greater Manchester. The Mayor stated that franchising had placed Greater Manchester in a stronger position than those without it as it gave greater control over best value for money. The operation of initiatives such as *Our Pass* would benefit from deregulation and franchising. The aim was to seek a reasonable and fair transport settlement, similar to that which London receives to operate their network.
- A member asked about the number of complaints that had been received and whether there was anything that could be learnt from this launch which could inform future launches. Officers responded that demobilisation of an operator was more challenging than expected, as was moving from an operator from one depot to another. There would be similar scenarios in future launches and there were lessons to be learned about planning for this and operators' feedback and advice would be included. There needed to be earlier access to depots and more holding space for the fleet during the transition. It was hoped that operators involved in the first tranche would also be available to advise operators in later tranches.
- A member echoed the challenges remaining around the app stating that feedback had included that there was no live tracking, that there were no maps available and that it was not compatible with Google or Apple Pay. Officers responded that the live tracking was linked to the manual input of data which was being addressed. Scheduled updates were planned which would include some incremental improvements alongside significant updates to be rolled out. The maps were to be

included as soon as possible. The compatibility of payment methods was scheduled for late 2023/early 2024. Similarly, journey planning was scheduled to be added in 2024. Clarification was given around tickets – there were no daily tram tickets but there were daily bus or multi-modal (bus and tram) tickets available through the app. The tap-in/tap-out method was still the recommended method.

- A question was raised about the high level of reliability on technology, the possibility of cyber attacks and what contingency plans were in place. Officers responded that there had been extensive cyber-attack testing on the network but assured members that there were strong safeguards and sufficient contingency plans in place to operate the network should an incident occur.
- It was acknowledged that some of the operators had gone above and beyond expectations with embracing the branding and ordering additional new vehicles ahead of schedule.

### **O&SC 28/23            BEE NETWORK CYCLE HIRE RECOVERY PLAN**

GM Mayor Andy Burham provided a brief overview to the cycle hire scheme and how it had been subject to unexpected levels of vandalism leading to a recovery plan. This had been a joint partnership approach from the operator, Greater Manchester Police, Transport for Greater Manchester and GMCA officers. There were now over 500 bikes in circulation. Some of the bays were still suspended, on advice of GMP.

It was acknowledged that GMP had devoted significant resources to assisting with the recovery and seven arrests had been made of people suspected of vandalism and/or theft of the cycles.

The Chair asked that the remainder of the report and discussions (in Parts A and B) be deferred to the next meeting on 25 October 2023.

### **RESOLVED /-**

That the report and discussions on the Bee Network Cycle Hire Recovery Plan be deferred to the next meeting on 25 October 2023.

### **O&SC 29/23            INTEGRATED WATER MANAGEMENT**

Councillor Tom Ross attended as the Green City Region portfolio lead to update on the Integrated Water Management Plan. This had been the topic of an Overview & Scrutiny task and finish group and presented to GMCA in May 2023.

The Delivery Plan which picks up many of the task and finish recommendations was to be submitted to GMCA on Friday 29 September 2023.

Members commented on the significant work that had been progressed on this agenda, but urged for stronger links between the GMCA, TfGM and Local Authorities to ensure that local planning processes can be supported to consider integrated water management as a priority, and effectively implement Schedule 3.

In relation to the recommendation on an increased level of awareness, there had been three round table sessions with key stakeholders and GM portfolio leads, following which there has been a dedicated session scheduled at the forthcoming Green Summit.

The review had suggested that the current measures contained within the Greater Manchester Strategy to identify whether water management had improved were perhaps not the most effective measures, and therefore suggested that the Greater Manchester Strategy Refresh scheduled for 2024 may be a good opportunity to ensure the most effective measures were included.

Increasing public awareness would be addressed through ongoing communication campaigns, it was suggested that the forthcoming national publication of surface water data would be a further opportunity to ensure that residents were aware of the actions they could take to improve water management.

The review had highlighted additional areas which would benefit from detailed scrutiny, and therefore it was suggested that 'water quality' remained on the work programme for the Committee.

**RESOLVED /-**

1. That the Committee recognised the effectiveness of the awareness programmes already completed but would urge for this work to be continued and expanded where possible.

2. That the Committee would like to see progress measurements clearly identified and suggested that the Greater Manchester Strategy refresh would be a good opportunity to do this.
3. That the Committee would like to include “Water Quality” and how it relates to the Water Management Plan as a future agenda item.

## **O&SC 30/23            WORK PROGRAMME & FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS**

### **RESOLVED /-**

That the Overview & Scrutiny work programme be noted.

## **O&SC 31/23            FUTURE MEETING DATES**

The Chair drew members’ attention to the list of future meeting dates.

### **RESOLVED /-**

That the schedule for future meetings be noted:

25 October 2023	1-3pm
22 November 2023	1-3pm
13 December 2023	1-3pm
24 January 2024	1-3pm
7 February 2024	1-3pm
21 February 2024	1-3pm
20 March 2024	1-3pm

## **O&SC 32/23            EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

That, under section 100 (A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public should be excluded from the meeting for the following items on business on the grounds that this involved the likely disclosure of exempt information, as set out in the relevant paragraphs of Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

**RESOLVED /-**

That the report and discussions on the Bee Network Cycle Hire Recovery Plan be deferred to the next meeting on 25 October 2023.