

**Minutes of the meeting of the
GMCA Overview & Scrutiny Committee
held on Wednesday 25 October 2023
at the Tootal Buildings, Broadhurst House, 1st floor,
56 Oxford Street, Manchester, M1 6EU**

Present:

Councillor Nadim Muslim	Bolton Council (Chair)
Councillor Peter Wright	Bolton Council
Councillor Russell Bernstein	Bury Council
Councillor Imran Rizvi	Bury Council
Councillor Basil Curley	Manchester City Council
Councillor Mandie Shilton Godwin	Manchester City Council
Councillor Holly Harrison	Oldham Council
Councillor Colin McLaren	Oldham Council
Councillor Sameena Zaheer	Rochdale Council
Councillor Patricia Dale	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 Debra Wailes	Wigan Council

Also in attendance:

Andy Burnham	GM Mayor
Kate Green	Deputy GM Mayor

Officers in attendance:

Eamonn Boylan	GMCA
Gillian Duckworth	GMCA
Julie Connor	GMCA
Elaine Mottershead	GMCA
Dan Diamond	GMCA
Simon Nokes	GMCA
Richard Nickson	Transport for Greater Manchester
Lou Cordwell	Chair of GM Business Board

O&SC 34/23 Welcome and Apologies

Councillor Rizvi was welcomed as the new member for Bury Council attending his first meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Councillor John Leech, Councillor Tom Besford, Councillor Joanne Marshall, Councillor Jenny Harrison, and Nicola Ward.

O&SC 35/23 Chair's Announcements and Urgent Business

The chair noted that the first meeting of the Task and Finish Group relating to the provision of affordable homes had taken place on 20 October 2023. The next meeting was scheduled to take place on 3 November 2023. Councillor Lewis Nelson was congratulated on being appointed chair for the task and finish group.

Resolved/-

That the appointment of Councillor Lewis Nelson as the Chair of the Task and Finish Group be noted.

O&SC 36/23 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Nelson declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 5 the Violence Reduction Strategy. However, the link was with his employer, and it was not an area of work that he specifically dealt with so it was agreed that he could continue to participate in the discussion.

O&SC 37/23 Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 September 2023

A member queried an action from the previous meeting about the circulation of the minutes of this Committee to districts. Progress on this would be checked with the Statutory Scrutiny Officer.

RESOLVED /-

That the Statutory Scrutiny Officer action the request regarding circulation of the minutes to districts and feedback to the Committee.

O&SC 38/23 Violence Reduction Strategy

Deputy GM Mayor Kate Green and Dan Diamond from the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) introduced this item and highlighted some key points to the Committee.

The VRU was introduced in Greater Manchester in 2019. From June 2022 to June 2023 there had been a 16% reduction in knife related crime, a 29% reduction in hospital admissions relating to use of knives and weapons, and a 29% reduction in homicides. Whilst these figures represented tragic incidents, the reductions were encouraging. The Deputy GM Mayor was keen to stress that most young people in Greater Manchester were not involved in violent incidents and did not carry weapons. Also, that the financial cost of addressing violent crime was not something to be overlooked. The ten-year strategy had been the result of an extensive period of consultation and engagement throughout all ten GM constituent local authorities.

The Deputy GM Mayor made specific reference to the Greater Manchester Youth Combined Authority and asked that her recognition of their important contribution to this work be noted.

The strategy's approach was two-fold in tackling violence – response and prevention - with five approaches or categories which the Deputy Mayor outlined as detailed in the report & Strategy.

To conclude, it was noted that the VRU was only funded until 2025, despite this being a ten-year strategy, but there was confidence that funding would continue after that date given the importance and value placed on the work being done. Within the VRU funding

constraints, the duration of funding agreements to providers in Greater Manchester had been maximised, usually two-three years in most cases, for sustainability.

The next step was that the Violence Reduction Strategy would be presented to the GMCA Committee on 24 November 2023 for approval and then a public launch scheduled for 12 December 2023. There would then be a move into detailed action plans alongside a closer look at methods of evaluation.

Comments and Questions:

- A question was raised regarding the next generation on from young people who could have significant influence. Also, there should be a way of capturing those who had been through the prison system and had come out either still affected or in a worse position. It was not clear whether any preventative work was being done in prisons.

In response, it was clarified that the prison service was not something that had been devolved to the Combined Authority and therefore the control of prisons was not within its remit. However, there were examples of good work such as the *Through the Gate Programme* and the substance misuse programme at HMP Forest Bank. Probation services, when commissioned, offered an opportunity to be effective in the management of offenders and to address those behaviours. Many of the programmes that were supported across this work programme involved the identification of a trusted adult in a young person's life, and this could be a way of addressing the concerns about the potential adverse influence from an older generation.

- Whilst *Stop and Search* was intelligence led and proportionate, the significant impact for ethnic minorities and often the damage to the trust with GMP was recognised. In response, it was noted that statistics were disproportionality lower in Greater Manchester than any other metropolitan authority but that did not mean that more should not be done. There was a deeper mistrust of GMP from some communities and this should be tackled. There was an opportunity to provide more information on this to the Committee, for example, the outcomes and ethnic breakdown of *Stop and Search* procedures.

- It was noted that rape and sexual assault were not referenced heavily in the report. However, the links to the gender-based violence strategy were reiterated. Young people face additional threats in online spaces as well and there was work being done with the Online Safety Bill. The Violence Reduction Unit worked with an educational specialist, Dr Antony Edkins to assist with specific programmes in Greater Manchester schools about respectful relationships and the avoidance of violent or risky behaviours.
- Whilst the approach for community led solutions was welcomed, there was concern that there might be too much reliance on community and voluntary provision. In response, it was acknowledged that there was a risk that the Violence Reduction Unit funding effectively replaced traditional youth services funding and activities, and this should not be the case. The reliance on the community and voluntary sector was in recognition of their ability to provide quality, flexible and innovative solutions. Feedback from the community and voluntary groups had been around sustainability and the challenges of short-term funding which was why groups had been given the maximum duration of funding possible.
- More information was requested about how children with care experience were recognised. It was acknowledged that outcomes for children in care or leaving care were significantly worse for educational attainment, physical and mental health, future employment prospects and their vulnerability to becoming involved in violence and crime. Many of the programmes being funded by the VRU were working with children in these situations, for example, the [Family Drug and Alcohol Court](#).
- A member asked about the difference between a school engagement officer and a school-based police officer and the purpose of their role in those settings. It was clarified that the officers were there to build relationships and support young people, not to specifically police or investigate situations. They would do so if there was a situation that warranted attention but that was not their purpose for being based in educational establishments.
- The strategy stated that *“Young People told us fear, anger, unsafe places, social media and discrimination were the key causes of violence.”* This quote felt

misplaced at the end of the strategy, as though it had come afterwards and had not been a catalyst for shaping the strategy. Members asked whether there could be progress updates on those issues that young people had specifically identified.

- There was discussion around when was early intervention early enough. Early years work such as the 1001 days programme and the family hubs initiatives were important and seen as running parallel to this strategy. In addition, some of the work being funded through the VRU was around boosting parenting skills.
- It was noted that the Strategy specifically mentioned support for women and girls but did not reference other types of gender-based violence. It was clarified that the Gender Based Violence Strategy does address multiple forms of violence including same-sex relationships, violence to trans people and generational violence. There were also links to domestic violence and the trauma informed approach.
- A member referenced the presentation from Councillor Arooj Shah who had attended a previous Committee meeting to talk about the work of the Race Equality Panel. The member asked whether the Panel had been invited to contribute or feedback on this strategy. It was confirmed that they had been consulted and a separate strand of work was being undertaken with them on disproportionality.
- The strategy contained information relating to the public's confidence in policing and there was a discussion around communication of good and sad news stories and the impact that had. It was agreed that the communications element was an important part of this work. There had been an emphasis on ensuring that there were some positive messages particularly through campaigns such as [#IsThisOk](#) and the [I Am Greater](#) campaign. Work was also ongoing with one of the media partners, [Unity Radio](#).
- The question of sustainability was raised and more work on the financial elements of the strategy was requested. In response, it was noted that whilst there could be more clarification on funding and investment, it would be difficult to give an overview in isolation as consideration should be given to the work that was done by schools, the

voluntary and community sector, and other partners.

- One member raised concern about drug dealing which appeared to be reaching epidemic proportions. Through [Programme Challenger](#), GMP were undertaking intergenerational work to tackle organised crime including drug dealing. There was a pilot programme running within six schools and this could be rolled out to others.
- A member asked about the VRU work in Oldham and was given a contact officer to speak to for further information. The Deputy GM Mayor talked about one of her visits to Oldham and she had been impressed with the community work that was being done which had been generated by residents.
- The number of survey responses was discussed and, whilst it could be viewed as disappointing, the positive perception was that higher numbers were often the result of negative feeling, and this did not seem to be the case. It was also noted that the survey was not the only means of engagement and an event during Summer 2023 was attended by over one hundred community and voluntary partners who were representing their communities.
- An increase in police recruitment was welcomed but there was a question raised about inexperienced officers and how lessons learned and improvements could be made. There also needed to be recognition of confidence in policing by young people and the wider community and more done to encourage reporting crime.

The GM Deputy Mayor thanked the Committee for helping to shape the strategy. The Chair summarised that the Violence Reduction Strategy was to be submitted to the GMCA Committee in November so any further questions or comments could be raised directly by contacting Dan Diamond or via Elaine Mottershead.

Resolved /-

That the comments and questions raised by the Committee, in consideration of the recommendations, be noted and used to guide further work of the Violence Reduction Unit.

O&SC 39/23 Bee Network Cycle Hire Recovery Plan

This item had been deferred from the previous Committee meeting (O&SC 28/23 refers). Richard Nickson from Transport for Greater Manchester presented the update and highlighted the following:

- Usage remained high despite some of the recent challenges. A high number of the trips were for commuting purposes and not just for leisure as previously thought.
- There had been positive effects from the regular activity by Greater Manchester Police.
- The on-street team could deal with some of the lower-level repair and maintenance issues but 95% of the repairs required have been through deliberate damage and this often meant having to return the equipment to the depot.
- The opportunities for linking with night-time economy work were beginning to be explored.

Members gave the following comments and questions:

- There were questions around the number of bikes and scooters that were returned and also whether the GPS tracking had been utilised for the safe recovery of stolen equipment. In response, it was confirmed that whilst the GPS tracking facility was used, there were also other means of tracking and recovering equipment. Illegal hires had been monitored and approximately ten arrests made.
- There was a question over why an area in Salford still had a suspended service. It was confirmed that this was due to low usage coupled with high vandalism. There were still other parts of the area nearby that were covered by the scheme. The suspended area was still under review and the shared aim was for the bikes to return to the Central Station area to make linkages across the transport system.
- The use of scooters on pavements was highlighted as a potential problem for residents with visual impairments.

- The collection time for bikes that had been reported abandoned was queried. It was confirmed that it could take up to four days but should not be any longer than that.

GM Mayor, Andy Burnham and GMCA Chief Executive Eamonn Boylan, concluded with thanks to the Overview and Scrutiny Members for bringing a focus to the recovery plan which had been much needed. There was still a successful scheme in operation which could now be built upon as part of the multi-modal approach with the GM Bee Network. It was confirmed that another [Operation AVRO](#) was planned before the end of the year and this would include the Bee Network cycle hire scheme.

O&SC 40/23 Greater Manchester Strategy: Business Board Update

Lou Cordwell, Chair of the GM Business Board attended to present the Committee with a progress update on the Strategy and highlighted the five priorities (view presentation [here](#)) and members commented as follows:

- **Poverty – children in low-income households:** the Committee highlighted barriers around means-testing which could preclude one household member from accessing training if the other was in employment. Similarly, asylum seekers already holding qualifications required by employers were facing barriers to work. It was suggested that further work should be done on removing or minimising these barriers.
- **Carbon Emissions** - the Committee welcomed the recent and planned changes to an integrated transport system but suggested that there was more work to do on tackling dependence on private vehicles. It was highlighted that the *School Streets* programmes were reliant on volunteers and this should be reviewed. Following discussions about decarbonisation in housing, the Committee would welcome a further briefing on housing development.
- **Employment Rate – racially minoritised/disabled people:** further work should be done on demonstrating employment pathways to residents of all ages. The current gap in clear pathways for neuro diverse and SEND residents was recognised.
- **Overweight and obese children and adults:** the clear links and interdependencies between obesity and good employment, public transport, and active travel, working

with schools and employers were recognised.

- **Child Development in Early Years:** it was agreed that school readiness should be re-established as a measurement.

In response, it was noted that there was a big opportunity with the Trailblazer to tackle some of these challenges looking at the good employment charter, real living wage, procurement procedures and supporting infrastructure improvements. In education, the MBacc would be driven by employers needs, taking into consideration what the most valuable qualifications would be for future employment opportunities. As an example, at Hopwood Hall, 50% of students taking T-levels had gone on to work for the employer that offered them a work experience placement.

Patronage of public transport had grown for bus and tram but less so for rail given the issues of reliability. It was noted that more zero emission buses were being purchased and the metrolink also works on renewable energy. Further improvements would be key in reducing private vehicle usage and, following the full implementation of the Bee Network in 2025, there would be some work on behaviour change. In the meantime, the benefits of franchising were starting to filter through not least because some of the operators had committed to getting more vehicles ahead of the expected schedule. The use of public transport and active travel options also linked to tackling obesity and ill-health.

The Committee raised further questions:

- The use of Our Pass was considered to be disproportionate in some areas although data shows that the majority of 16-18 year olds across the region were aware of it. It was recognised that the disproportion could be, for example, in areas where the use of metrolink instead of buses was more prevalent. Work was ongoing to look at further development of Our Pass.
- A member raised concern about household situations where one adult was working and, for that reason, another adult was refused access to training because of this. In response, it was stated that this could be looked at with the Adult Education and other budgets available to provide training.

GM Mayor Andy Burnham noted that one member had asked a query, outside of the meeting, regarding the HS2 announcements. The Mayor offered to provide an informal briefing to the Committee if they would find it useful.

Resolved /-

1. That the draft progress report be approved, subject to comments, noting the development in approach to the progress reporting, with a greater emphasis on whole system metrics and actions.
2. That the whole system actions, and the next steps for progressing these actions through a round of thematic, sectoral, and place-based engagement on the findings, be agreed.
3. That the impact assessment summary be noted.
4. That the Committee note that the process adopted for the development of this progress report, had not gathered sufficient detail to assess specific impacts arising from delivery of programmes and policies supporting the GMS ambitions.
5. That the Committee note that the assessment completed takes an overview approach, considering the strategic intent of the GMS and collective ability to, over time, achieve that strategic intent.
6. That the GM Mayor Andy Burnham provides an informal briefing on HS2 to the Overview & Scrutiny Members.

O&SC 41/23 Work Programme & Forward Plan of Key Decisions

Resolved /-

That the Overview & Scrutiny work programme be noted.

O&SC 42/23 Future Meeting Dates

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

Resolved /-

That the schedule for future meetings be noted:

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 43/23 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.

O&SC 44/23 Bee Network Cycle Hire Recovery Plan (Part B)

Resolved /-

That the report and discussions on the Bee Network Cycle Hire Recovery Plan be noted.