

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GM AIR QUALITY ADMINISTRATION
COMMITTEE HELD ON 13 JULY 2023 AT THE GMCA OFFICES**

PRESENT:

GMCA	Councillor Eamonn O'Brien
Manchester	Councillor Tracey Rawlins
Bolton	Councillor Shafaqat Shaikh
Bury	Councillor Alan Quinn
Oldham	Councillor Abdul Jabbar
Rochdale	Councillor Richard Jackson
Salford	Councillor Mike McCusker
Stockport	Councillor Mark Roberts
Tameside	Councillor Denise Ward
Trafford	Councillor Aidan Williams
Wigan	Councillor Joanne Marshall

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

GMCA	Eamonn Boylan
GMCA	Gillian Duckworth
GMCA	Ninoshka Martins
TfGM	Frank Tudor
TfGM	Megan Black

AQC 23/01 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received and noted from councillors Richard Silvester, Tom Besford and Paul Prescott.

AQC 23/02 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

Gillian Duckworth, Monitoring Officer, GMCA opened the meeting and invited nominations for the role of Chair for the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

The Committee agreed the appointment of Councillor Eamonn O'Brien as Chair for the 2023/24 municipal year.

RESOLVED /-

That Councillor Eamonn O'Brien be appointed as Chair for the 2023/24 municipal year.

AQC 23/03 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR

The Committee agreed the appointment of Councillor Tracey Rawlins (Manchester) as Vice-Chair for the 2023/24 Municipal Year.

RESOLVED /-

That Councillor Tracey Rawlins (Manchester) be appointed as Vice-Chair for the 2023/24 Municipal Year.

**AQC 23/04 MEMBERSHIP OF THE GM CLEAN AIR QUALITY
ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE 2023/24**

RESOLVED /-

The Committee was requested to note the Membership for the 2023/24 Municipal Year.

**AQC 23/05 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT AND ANNUAL
DECLARATION FORM**

Members were reminded of their obligations under the GMCA Members' Code of Conduct and were requested to complete an annual declaration of interest form, which had been emailed to them by the Governance & Scrutiny Officer.

RESOLVED /-

That the GMCA's Member Code of Conduct (Appendix A of the report) be noted.

AQC 23/06 TERMS OF REFERENCE

RESOLVED /-

That the Terms of Reference of the GM Air Quality Administration Committee be noted.

AQC 23/07 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS AND URGENT BUSINESS

There were no Chair's announcements or urgent business.

AQC 23/08 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received in relation to any item on the agenda.

AQC 23/09 THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 27 FEBRUARY 2023

RESOLVED /-

That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2023 be approved, as a correct record.

AQC 23/10 GM CLEAN AIR PLAN – JULY 2023 UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report that provided an update on the Case for a new Greater Manchester Clean Air Plan.

Since the last report in February 2023 the Greater Manchester Authorities have been undertaken the work required to supply further evidence as requested by Government in January 2023. It was reported that the 'Approach to Address Persistent Exceedances Identified on the A58 Bolton Road, Bury' was submitted on 8 March 2023. It was anticipated that the remainder of this work would be concluded by end of June 2023. However, this work has been impacted as a result of receiving direction from Government to pause any new spending on bus retrofit due to the poor sustainability of the bus retrofit solutions. As such a six-month focused research programme to investigate the causes of this poor performance and to scope how performance can be improved had been launched with findings anticipated to be reported in the Autumn.

Given Government's position to not recommend any further retrofit purchases until their research has been completed, TfGM have contacted those operators with vehicles in the process of being retrofitted. The Committee was therefore requested to agree the recommendation, that where an operator has made a financial commitment that retrofits be allowed to proceed, e.g. placed a deposit that is non-refundable and where an operator has not made a financial commitment, to pause any new bus retrofit applications at this time.

It was noted that government has undertaken further roadside remote emissions of bus performance in Manchester to address their potential concerns about the original study being undertaken in November and December 2022 due to the cold weather conditions. Therefore, the outcomes of this research may materially change government's understanding of bus retrofit.

Members raised their concerns around the associated delays as GM would need to revise the plan to reflect the outcomes of the research. It was also highlighted that there could

be an increased risk of legal challenge if GM's proposals could be seen as founded on an evidence base that is not accurate or up-to-date.

It was noted that these tasks would take a significant period of time to complete. Therefore, the Committee was recommended to write to the Secretary of State, setting out the Authorities desire to align the reporting of GM's programme of work with Government's, given their interdependency to deal with this unprecedented issue.

Members highlighted that GM, in good faith had accepted the Clean Vehicle Retrofit Accreditation Scheme however it was Government's responsibility to adequately test the efficacy of the retrofit technology prior to the rollout of the scheme. Officers explained that the study would explore how the accreditations were approved, including the causes of poor performance and how performance can be improved. This would be launched with the findings that were anticipated to be reported at the conclusion of the six-month focused research programme that was currently being undertaken by Government.

A member sought to understand what areas of work could be undertaken until Government's exercise had concluded. Officers assured members that they were working with JAQU to develop a bespoke process to model emissions from retrofitted buses. Further to that, the electrification of the Bee Network provided a great opportunity for TfGM to explore speed limits and congestion and to specify lower emitting buses (OEM Euro VI10 and electric vehicles) to run on routes with NO2 exceedances.

Members sought to understand whether it was feasible to request a subsidy for the electrification of buses or whether any other support could be expected from Government. In response, it was stated that there would be no clear indication of support until the six-month focused research programme had concluded. With regards to the suggestion made regarding the electrification of buses, it was reported that the market was not geared to delivering the needed vehicles that GM would need to achieve it's CO2 and NO2 targets.

In response to a member's query regarding the impact on other vehicles that have been retrofitted officers explained that a single HGVs and no Taxi's had undergone retrofit therefore there was no significant impact to other vehicles.

In conclusion, the committee was assured that TfGM would be carrying out necessary activities to ensure that the commitment of GM authorities to implement an investment led plan, deliver compliance with the legal limit value in the shortest possible time and by no later than 2026, in accordance with Government direction.

RESOLVED /-

1. That the latest position with the government's National Bus Retrofit Programme and the implications for the GM Clean Air Plan be noted.
2. That it be noted that government has commenced a six-month focused research programme to quickly investigate the causes of poor bus retrofit performance and scope how performance can be improved, anticipated to be reporting in the Autumn.
3. That it be noted that a letter would be written to the Secretary of State setting out the Authorities' desire to align the reporting of GM's programme of work with the government's given their interdependency to deal with this unprecedented issue.
4. That it be agreed that GM CAP funded bus retrofits be allowed to proceed where an operator has made a financial commitment but where an operator has not made a financial commitment any new bus retrofit applications be paused.
5. That it be noted that the 2022 GM CAP monitoring data indicates that nitrogen dioxide air pollution has increased compared with 2021 but is below levels recorded pre-pandemic in 2019.
6. That it be noted that analysis of the factors influencing pollution emissions and air quality indicate that the concentrations have been affected by:
 - An increase in car traffic compared with 2021, and associated congestion although traffic is still below 2019;
 - Differing weather conditions in 2022 compared with 2021, reducing dispersion of

pollutants – likely driven by warmer sunnier conditions over the year; and

- Bus fleet emissions as a result of the impact of the variable performance of the government’s bus retrofit programme, as set out in section 5.

AQC 23/11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED /-

That future meeting dates for the 2023/24 municipal year are to be confirmed.