

**Minutes of the meeting of the GMCA Overview & Scrutiny Committee
held on Wednesday 24 January 2024
at the Tootal Buildings, Broadhurst House, 1st floor,
56 Oxford Street, Manchester, M1 6EU**

Present:

Councillor Nadim Muslim	Bolton Council (Chair)
Councillor Russell Bernstein	Bury Council
Councillor Imran Rizvi	Bury Council
Councillor Basil Curley	Manchester City Council
Councillor Mandie Shilton Godwin	Manchester City Council
Councillor Jenny Harrison	Oldham Council
Councillor Colin McLaren	Oldham Council
Councillor Tom Besford	Rochdale Council
Councillor Patricia Dale	Rochdale Council
Councillor Lewis Nelson	Salford City Council
Councillor Helen Hibbert	Stockport Council
Councillor Jill Axford	Trafford Council
Councillor Shaun Ennis	Trafford Council
Councillor Nathan Evans	Trafford Council
Councillor Fred Walker	Wigan Council
Councillor Maria Brabiner	Salford Council
Councillor Mary Whitby	Bury Council

Also in attendance:

Andy Burnham	GM Mayor
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Officers in attendance:

Eamonn Boylan	GMCA
Nicola Ward	GMCA
Helen Davies	GMCA
Steve Wilson	GMCA
Peter Boulton	Transport for Greater Manchester
Julie Reide	Transport for Greater Manchester
Superintendent Gareth Parkin	Greater Manchester Police

O&SC 65/23 Welcome and Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Joshua Brooks (Salford), Councillor Naila Sharif (Tameside), Councillor Peter Wright (Bolton) and Councillor John Leech (Manchester).

O&SC 66/23 Chair's Announcements and Urgent Business

The Chair announced the additional GMCA Overview and Scrutiny meeting in February and requested that any apologies for absence should be registered as soon as possible.

O&SC 67/23 Declarations of Interest

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

**O&SC 68/23 Minutes of the GMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee
held on 13 December 2024**

Resolved/-

That the minutes of the GMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 13 December 2024 be approved as a correct and accurate record.

O&SC 69/23 Mayoral General Budget and Precept Proposals

The Chair invited the Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, to present the Mayoral General Budget and Precept Proposals to the Committee. Context was given on finances and the Committee was advised that the budget had been difficult to calculate given that finances for Local Government were in a poor position with council tax being used to fund more than ever. The discipline had been to minimise this extra burden where possible.

The Committee noted that Greater Manchester Police (GMP) was on a significant pathway to improvement ahead of any other force in the country; an example of this was the speed of answer for 999 and 111 calls by the GM public which were now under 1 minute. However, GMP acknowledged there were still achievements to be made and the force had not yet fully recovered the cuts to staffing levels over the last decade. Further challenge had arisen with the publication of the police settlement 2023/24 in mid-December 2023, which had been significantly below inflation and created a "black hole" in the GMP finances, that the proposed precept would not cover. However, it was

anticipated that the £13 increase, in-line with the majority of police forces across England and Wales, would enable GMP remain stable and not disrupt the progress being made.

The Mayoral Precept was proposed to increase by £5 for a Band D property in GM, the rationale for this was due to the number of people in fuel poverty, particularly in GM were facing hardships with difficult winter periods, it was anticipated the increase would minimise the required increase. The mayoral general function element of this precept had been frozen with no proposed increase, this element partially funded schemes including Our Pass and Bus Reform.

The Committee was advised that the Bee Network had been fully operational in the north of the borough for 2-months. Prior to going live with the Bee Network, limited bus performance data was shared with GMCA due to commercial reasons and so the budget had been forecast based on a set of assumptions. Despite some initial teething issues, current data showed that the Bee Network was a better offer for GM residents than the bus network it replaced. Tranche One data had returned 15% increase in revenue of the farebox, and if the data was replicated in the north of GM, this could be a strong financial outlet. The Mayor of Greater Manchester confirmed the £2 fare cap would be retained.

There were proposed increases to the Mayoral Precept in relation to the GM Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS). The Kerslake Review, following the events at the Manchester Arena in 2017, had uncovered many issues at GMFRS including the financial position of the organisation, at that time it was suggested that the fleet held 50 pumps. The Fire Review conducted last year recognised the growth and change of Manchester City Centre, and that 52 pumps should be the baseline which has created a stronger position for GMFRS. An Inspectorate report was due in February 2024 and it was expected to recognise the progress made post-2017.

The Committee was invited to seek clarification or questions in relation to the proposed budget:

- It was clarified that crewing GMFRS in Manchester City Centre had been identified as a significant issue, this was revenue funding and could not be found via Section 106 or CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) funding which would only cover capital expenditure.

- The data that related to the 15% increase in the farebox would be monitored as income across the Bee Network. The expectation was the more data captured across the network would help shape to better inform the 2024/25 budget. The GM Mayor informed the Committee that from 25 January there would be weekly performance data published to increase the accountability of the Bee Network.
- The £5.4million current budget requirement for homelessness across GM was met from a number of funding sources including: NHS, Mayors Charity, Ministry of Justice, Rough Sleepers Initiative, with £500k being met via government initiatives. A Bed Every Night provided beds for 600 people per night, however challenges in Home Office policies meant the eviction of people at short notice (with no transitional support in place). Additionally, there was evidence of mini-buses bringing in additional homeless people from outside GM to Manchester and Salford over Christmas, A Bed Every Night had to be expanded as the system was in an unmanageable position, further exasperated by the ceasing of any Government funding to support asylum seekers.
- The government funded, new model of neighbourhood policing was announced in 2023, as part of this there was a commitment to named officers in every ward, the programme of change was being finalised as part of a process change at GMP and had included Superintendents moving into districts.
- The Committee agreed that whilst it was not a statutory duty, the burden of flood and water management was a large part of the remit for GMFRS and this risk would increase in the future. The Mayor of Greater Manchester noted that the level of transparency for GMFRS was at the highest level for a decade.
- There were several positive outcomes from the bus reform: financial reserves could be used this year to fund the Bee Network, the 15% increase on the farebox gave confidence in the system, despite some scars, the covid effects had gone and patronage on the network had increased. Whilst complaints of those appealing fines had increased the likelihood was due to more enforcement and fines being awarded. The Committee requested that TfGM work towards a fair culture of enforcement, not presenting as hostile or military.
- The Bee Network was largely inherited with some required enhancements for Tranche One such as the bus washing facilities at the bus depot in Bolton that were in a bad state of repair. The Bee Network phone app was being reviewed as

the current tracking was not performing as well as the previous app, a solution was expected in early/mid-March before Tranche Two went live.

- The Committee recognised that the Our Pass initiative was an important solution to support GM ambition for a technical education for young people seeking an equal alternative to a university education.
- Councillor Maria Brabiner noted the work being pioneered in Salford for homelessness being featured on the local news and thanked the Mayor of Greater Manchester for his continued support in this area.
- The Committee agreed that policies by the Home Office to evict people in 7-days with no transitional support did not lead to any form of sustainable housing especially when considering 6.5k children were in this position. This was damaging and disruptive for education, mental and health impacts, the change back to 28-days was welcomed.
- The GMFRS services grant was below inflation, which had resulted in further challenge to the budget that had been met through the use of reserves. The GM Treasurer noted the loss of the services grant equated to an 80% cut from the Local Government Settlement (£1.1million) and would advocate for a reinstatement of the services grant.
- The Committee noted the fire services estate needed significant attention including security. GMCA contributed to the North-West control costs but had challenged for a fairer deal by spreading the cost more equitably with partners.
- The GMP grant had been continually funded below inflation, the Mayor for Greater Manchester noted a cross-party agreement should be drafted in order to avoid uncertain cuts and funding decisions. The proposed precept increase for 2024/25 of £13 would not cover the “black hole” in the GMP budget that was approximately in excess of £40million. The GM Treasurer noted the £40million gap on a budget of £800million equated to a reduction on the precept of £20million and would be more efficient; a full paper was being prepared for the Police, Fire and Crime Panel for consideration next week and outlined the full scope of savings.
- The unique model of town centre regeneration in Stockport by the Mayoral Development Corporation (MDC) that included improvements for the Bee Network, and the interchange due for completion in February 2024 was noted. The Mayor for Greater Manchester commented that the model pioneered would be available for other areas across GM such as Farnworth, and could include the

release of Brownfield land. An example of this was the GMP site on Chester Road where Truly Affordable Net Zero (TANZ) homes were included as part of the scheme.

Resolved/-

1. That the recommendations be commended to be considered by the GMCA at its meeting on the 26 January 2024.
2. That the Committee would welcome the opportunity to get a true picture of the financial landscape of the Bee Network once all tranches have been implemented and the farebox has stabilised.
3. That concerns regarding access to ABEN be picked up directly with Cllr Ennis.
4. That confirmation would be provided to Cllr Ennis as to when his ward would be given a named GMP officer.
5. That members of the Committee would receive a copy of the recent Fire Cover Review for more detail on its contents.
6. That further information on the recent cuts to policing budgets also be shared with the Committee.

O&SC 70/23 Greater Manchester Vision Zero Strategy

The Chair invited the Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, to present the Greater Manchester Vision Zero Strategy to the Committee. The Committee was given context that the roads across GM were not as safe as they should be with 64 fatalities per month, many being motorists, and 852 fatalities or seriously injured per year. The aim for GM was to ensure that road use is safer for everyone, whether those cycling, walking or using a car. During school half-term the perception by the public was a significant traffic reduction on the roads, however data showed this was just 7% which makes the ambition for a different mix of journeys e.g. less journeys of less than 1km and 50% of journeys being carried out using public transport seem attainable.

Peter Boulton, Head of Highways, TfGM advised the Committee that the Strategy had been written in partnership with the National Highways, Health Sector, Business, GMCA, TfGM and the District Local Authorities. The next steps were for consultation and an Action Plan in consultation with the public. The final strategy and action plan would be presented to GMCA in November 2024.

The Committee was advised that a societal drive for change was needed in respect of road safety, and instances of fatalities needed to be challenged and not accepted. Superintendent Gareth Parkin advised the Committee that GMP worked closely with TfGM and had achieved a reduction in road traffic fatalities across GM of 31% in 2023 compared with 2022. This figure bucked the national trend, yet it never made front page news despite being significantly higher than knife crime.

The Committee was invited to seek clarification or questions in relation to GM Vision Zero Strategy:

- The Committee acknowledged that congestion was a growing risk particularly in relation to safety around schools. School Street Schemes were successful and appreciated by schools, children and parents creating a positive orderly atmosphere and safe spaces around schools, the issue with creating more schemes was funding, enforcement and management. Some councils were exploring options for decriminalising traffic offences, or camera enforcement as an income stream to deliver safe streets. It was acknowledged that funding for schemes linked to traffic regulations would need to be explored. The Mayor for Greater Manchester expressed his ambition to incorporate School Streets as a GM policy in a targeted manner, he committed to raising this with TfGM and GMP to explore further.
- Councillors gave anecdotal experience of dealing with drivers exhibiting anti-social behaviour using the roads on the outskirts of GM towards the rural counties as a racetrack. Superintendent Gareth Parkin expressed the notion that every serious injury or fatality was preventable. Deterrent measures such as speed enforcement cameras across GM, uplift to Road Policing Teams to enable more prosecutions, the seizure of 10k vehicles driving criminally or illegally and targeted operations to specific issues such as Car Cruises have resulted in criminals choosing to move activity into other counties as there is now more threat of enforcement within GM.
- The data contained within the report referenced the number of fatalities in each authority, it was noted that some authorities were much larger than others and have different characteristics so therefore should not be compared. Additionally, statistics that demonstrated more men were injured on a bicycle than women could be down to the number of male cyclists being significantly more than

women. This should be considered when presenting the data within the report. Members expressed an interest in further analysis of the data to determine why the fatalities happened and if it was due to criminal driving.

- The Mayor of Greater Manchester expressed concern at the standard position of the Department for Transport that Local Authorities are to determine need for road calming measures based on number of casualties and that strategies should be prevention driven. The Chair of the Bee Network Committee had resolved to write to the Department for Transport to review the criteria for the implementation of road traffic measures and meet with GMP regarding the use of local information to inform interventions.
- Whilst the 20MPH initiative was reported as a positive measure in the London Boroughs, Members had anecdotal experience that GMP would find it difficult to enforce speeding within a 20MPH zone and if this was the general perception it would therefore not be a successful measure to enhance safety.
- The Committee expressed concern about the use of residential streets to create 'rat-runs' for drivers, the combination of side streets and pedestrian corridors carried a significant risk during key times of the day. Community enforcement was suggested a potential mitigation measure.
- The Head of Highways, TfGM noted that anti-engineering models could be explored e.g. anti-skid to mitigate sharp bends.
- The Mayor of Greater Manchester advised the Committee that complaints were often raised with regards to food delivery riders, often bicycles had been enhanced to reach speeds in excess of 15MPH and GMP had seized a number of these. Discussions were ongoing to implement a code of practice for delivery drivers similar to London.

Resolved/-

1. That the draft Vision Zero Strategy be supported, commending it for approval by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority.
2. That the draft Vision Zero Strategy and the commencement of a period of engagement with stakeholders and the public be endorsed.
3. That it be noted that a supporting Action Plan be developed following a period of stakeholder and public engagement on the strategy.

4. That the challenge to the Department of Transport regarding the use of road deaths as criteria for the provision of road safety be supported.
5. That each Local Authority should consider specific traffic calming measures on an individual community basis and consideration should also be given to engineering elements such as anti-skid road surfaces in particular hotspots.
6. That data should be normalised when used to compare GM Local Authorities or different road users as populations and characteristics are vastly different.

O&SC 71/23 Work Programme

The Chair noted the Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Group exploring the subject of Affordable Housing across GM had been meeting regularly and an update was expected back to this Committee in due course.

Resolved /-

1. That the Overview & Scrutiny work programme be noted; and
2. That members contact the Governance & Scrutiny Team directly if they had suggestions for topics on future briefing sessions.

O&SC 72/23 Dates of Future Meetings

The schedule for the future meetings was noted:

7 February 2024	1-3pm
21 February 2024	1-3pm
20 March 2024	1-3pm